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MELCOMBE LODGE ;

OR,

Traits of Family Pride!

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY A LADY.

“ The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,
“ Whilst the poor grasshopper must chirp below :
“ Like him, unnotic'd, I, and such as I,
“ Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly.”

VOL. II.

LYNN :

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Melcombe Lodge.

CHAPTER I.

SEVERAL days elapsed without any letter arriving from Lord d'Arcy. At length Mr. De Clairville received one directed in his Lordship's hand, the contents of which were as follows,

“ I have delayed writing, my dear sir,
“ hoping to have fixed the time for again
“ visiting Melcombe and its dear inhabi-

“tants ; but I now dare not think of re-
“turning thither, without having first
“received permission from yourself.”

“My father’s conduct has cut me to the
“soul ; he acknowledges his only objec-
“tion to my forming a connection in your
“family, is, that the father of my Sophia
“is a commoner. Your character my
“dear sir, is even by him venerated, but
“so strongly rooted are his prejudices, all
“my efforts to shake them have hitherto
“been fruitless.”

“My adored mother has exerted all her
“influence with him, but in vain. He
“tells her he has entered into engage-
“ments for me with the Marquis of Lon-
“gueville’s eldest daughter ; and that
“neither his honor nor mine will allow of
“his breaking through them. But does
“he think that I will thus consent to sa-
“crifice myself to his ambition ? Never,

“ never ! I am indeed most truly wretch-
“ ed. The words you made use of in our
“ last conference are ever present to my
“ recollection. ‘ If Lord Montreuil is
“ averse to your forming a connection
“ with my daughter, that daughter shall
“ never with my consent become your
“ wife.’ Retract then, I entreat you, my
“ revered Mr. De Clairville, for I feel it
“ utterly impossible to resign your Sophia.
“ Grant me once more, admission under
“ your hospitable roof, nor allow your
“ liberal mind to imbibe prejudices equally
“ injurious to my happiness, as those my
“ father has adopted. I dare not desire
“ you to express all I feel to your beloved
“ daughter, until I have your permission
“ to return to Melcombe. My sister is
“ possibly ere this with the Deresfords,
“ as her last letter, filled with descriptions
“ of her happy visit to you, mentioned
“ the expected arrival of our cousins at the
“ Priory.”

“ Excuse the incoherence of this letter ;
“ write, I entreat you, immediately, and
“ may your answer be favorable to my
“ wishes.”

“ Yours, my dear sir,

“ With the warmest regard,

“ London, Feb. 1817. d’Arcy.”

Mr. De Clairville, having finished reading this letter, put it into the hands of his wife.

“ We must hasten my love,” he said,
“ to end all poor Sophia’s hopes of a favorable issue to this application of Lord d’Arcy to the Earl.”

“ Unhappy young man,” cried Mrs. De Clairville, as she returned the letter to her husband, “ you will now repent having forgotten the good resolutions you formed

on first opening your heart to the father of your beloved Sophia, when you reflect that your unguarded conduct has most probably occasioned as much unhappiness to her, as misery to yourself! But you will, my dear Edward, answer this letter immediately?

“ Such is my intention, and you my Matilda will seek our dear child ; perhaps it is better she should not become acquainted with more of its contents than is necessary to convince her, that his Lordship’s application to his father has been unsuccessful. Lady Grace leaves us to day, and will soon accompany the Deresfords to Town, which as things are circumstanced, I am not sorry for.”

Mr. De Clairville then repaired to his library to answer Lord d’Arcy’s letter, leaving his amiable partner to the distressing task of breaking its contents to her poor Sophia.

After assuring his Lordship, he was more grieved, than surprised at the information his letter contained, Mr. De Clairville continued thus.

“ I feel most sincerely for the present
“ situation of your mind, and could I do
“ so, consistently with the respect I owe
“ myself, would seek to alleviate it: but,
“ as I have before observed to you, I never
“ can degrade my family by permitting a
“ daughter of it to enter one, which is averse
“ to receiving her.

“ What has passed cannot now be re-
“ called, nor do I wish by reverting to it
“ to encrease your present sufferings.

“ You will, my dear young friend, I trust,
“ soon regain your former tranquillity, and
“ find yourself inclined to meet the wishes
“ of the Earl. Report speaks highly in

“ praise of Lady Lucretia Selburne ; may
“ she occupy that place in your affections
“ I should have wished my Sophia to have
“ done, had not insuperable obstacles in-
“ tervened to prevent it. Your sister has
“ promised to write frequently to her
“ friends, and through her we shall al-
“ ways be happy to hear of you, but it is
“ better on all accounts, we should not
“ meet at present.”

“ With earnest wishes for your happi-
“ ness, in which my Matilda joins,

“ I remain,

“ My dear Lord d’Arcy,

“ Yours most faithfully,

Melcombe Lodge. “ Ed. De Clairville.”

Sophia shed no tears when informed of
the unsuccessful issue of Lord d’Arcy’s

application to his father. Hers was a silent grief, more affecting than that the most violent sorrow could have produced. Her complexion it is true, was much faded, and it was also evident she no longer took delight in her former occupations; but she never allowed herself the indulgence of weeping in private; on the contrary, she strove to banish the remembrance of her late happy prospects from her mind; and would even endeavour to consider Lord d'Arcy the husband of Lady Lucretia; but a pang she could not at these times suppress, too plainly intimated it would be impossible for her to hear of such an event having taken place, with any tolerable degree of composure. Her health sunk under such continued constraint, and Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville saw the necessity of her immediately changing the scene, and mentioned their wish for her returning into Hampshire with her uncle and cousin. Sophia at first felt averse to this

plan, but finding how much it was the desire of her father and mother that she should leave Melcombe for some time, she reluctantly gave her consent.

Sir Charles, attributing his niece's ill looks entirely to her fall, was anxious she should take the advice of an eminent Surgeon in Town; but finding neither his sister or Mr. De Clairville saw the necessity of this, he said no more on the subject; though it was evident he thought them too little apprehensive of the consequences, that might result from the accident.

Charlotte Warburton spent a day at Melcombe before Sophia left it. Major Singleton had offered himself, had been accepted, and was at this time in Town, making all necessary preparations for their union.

It had been settled, that the young couple were to take possession of a handsome house in Upper Seymour Street, which Mr. Singleton had purchased for them. Charlotte invited her young friends, particularly Sophia, to pass some weeks with her in London, after her marriage. There had been a time when the latter would have accepted such an invitation with pleasure, but it had passed; and thanking her friend, she would have declined availing herself of it, but Charlotte applying to Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville easily obtained their consent to her wishes, as they were under no apprehension of their daughter's encountering Lord d'Arcy in Town. Mr. De Clairville had lately received a letter from him, in which he mentioned his design of going abroad as soon as things were tolerably settled on the Continent. Sophia was by their persuasion induced to yield compliance to her friend's wish of

having her with her, and it was settled she should join Charlotte in London the latter end of the following month.

Charles had accompanied his sister to Melcombe, and was now publicly acknowledged the lover of Ellen ; his father had purchased for him the next turn of a fine living not far from Ashmore ; the young man was to be ordained in a few weeks and to take possession of a small Parsonage house beautifully situated in a neighbouring county.

It had been the wish of Mrs. De Clairville, that Ellen should not marry till the next year ; but Charles was so importunate with her to alter this determination, that she was at length prevailed upon, though not with a very good grace to comply. The latter end of the following summer threatened to deprive her of two of her beloved children : as Colonel Howard

who had been at Melcombe several days, was urgent with Harriet to fix a time for their union, and it was with some difficulty his fair mistress could induce him to wait till her sister also changed her name, as it was the wish of both they should be married on the same day.

Sophia had heard more than once from Lady Grace since her return to Town. In all her letters, she lamented to her friend the alteration that had taken place in her beloved brother since he had left Melcombe. Her mother, she said, was wretched about him; but if aware of the cause of his evident unhappiness, had never hinted it to her. "My father," she proceeded, "watches Arthur continually, notwithstanding I can see, he does not wish it to be observed. We are all going to spend the Easter week at Longueville house; but though I feel a great regard for the Marquis and his family, I cannot

love them as I do you. Your cousin the Marquis of Ormondsty is a frequent visitor at our house, and I am always happy to see him, as to him I can talk of the dear family at Melcombe. Arthur never joins in our conversation at these times; he that appeared so charmed with you all, now seldom mentions your name. But he is indeed so unlike himself in every respect, that were you now to meet, I think you would not recognize him."

Sophia's spirits were not much amended by the account her friend gave of the state of her brother's mind: she now believed she could have felt comparative happiness had she not learnt how far Lord d'Arcy was from feeling it; and her hopes being entirely over of any change ever taking place in Lord Montreuil's sentiments, she could only trust his son might in a foreign country regain that tranquility he had been deprived of in his own.

The morning at length arrived that was to convey Sophia from her hitherto happy home. Emily's spirits appeared equally depressed with her cousin's: Sir Charles had invited Edward to be of the party, but he declined his uncle's invitation, urging his long absence from home as his excuse; but promising to visit Woodley in the course of the summer.

The travellers proceeded to—, there they slept the first night, and the following day reached the Park, where they found Mrs. Sedley awaiting their arrival.

This Lady, now that her charge no longer required her services, had requested leave to retire to a small cottage romantically situated at one corner of the Park, which Sir Charles had presented to her for her life. Emily sorry to part with her maternal friend, yet unwilling to detain her

against her inclination, had taken upon herself to arrange every thing both within and without doors in a manner agreeable to the taste of Mrs. Sedley ; whom she put in possession of her little demesne a few days before she had accompanied her father to Melcombe.

Mrs. Sedley observed with concern the alteration that had taken place in her beloved pupil since she had left her. In that countenance, which by its expression of happiness formerly gave so much delight to them who loved her, was now only to be traced a serious, and generally an absent look. The worthy governess sought to learn from Sophia the occasion of this striking change, but without gaining any information from her ; for the latter guessing her brother was in some measure implicated in Emily's loss of spirits, and unwilling to impart her suspicions to Mrs. Sedley,

attributed it to fatigue alone, and fearful of being led into dropping any hint that might raise alarm in the mind of Mrs. Sedley, she hastened from her as soon as politeness allowed, and joined her uncle who she saw from the window was walking in the grounds.

CHAP. II.



The following morning at breakfast, Sir Charles desired his niece and daughter to look out their smartest dresses, as the County Ball was to be held in three days at—; and he was chosen one of the stewards for that evening. He also mentioned having received a letter from his old friend Willoughby, intimating his intention of taking Woodley in his way to Town ; and that he should be accompanied by his wife and family. “They will be here to-morrow,” continued Sir Charles, “you will therefore my dear girls,

have one smart beau at least, in your train on thursday night, and a very smart one, Sophia; so do not look so indifferent at this intelligence."

"I wish," said Emily, "Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter were equally as agreeable as Ormsby, and I should look forward to their visit with some degree of pleasure."

"What reason have you my love, for disliking my old friend thus?" enquired Sir Charles; "you are a very great favorite with her."

"Do not, I entreat you, my dear Papa, call Mrs. Willoughby your friend. But perhaps I know her better than you do, from having had opportunities of seeing what is passing behind the scenes, her behaviour to her niece being tyrannical in the extreme. Annie is considered by her aunt merely as a kind of humble companion to her cousin,

who hating every woman who is handsomer than herself, leads the poor girl a most terrible life."

"I recollect," returned Sir Charles, "to have heard something of this before: do you think my love, Miss Falconer will make one in her uncle's suit?"

"I have no doubt she will. You my dear Sophia," continued Emily, "will be as much inclined as myself, to condemn the conduct of Mrs. Willoughby to her unoffending niece. Annie Falconer is a lovely girl; sensible and well informed: she is the daughter of Mrs. Willoughby's only brother, who died abroad many years since, leaving behind him a wife and infant daughter; Mrs. Falconer after her husband's death retired to a pleasant village at some distance from the metropolis; where I have heard Annie say, resided a most amiable family, who on her mother's settling

there, sought her out, and in a short time became so attached to her, that scarcely a day passed without bringing some part of the Ainsley family to her cottage : the younger ones were never happy unless the little Annie partook with them, their studies or amusements ; and Mrs. Falconer was anxious her darling child should take advantage of this partiality, as by that means she had an opportunity of receiving lessons from masters her confined income would not have permitted her obtaining for her daughter.

“ In this delightful family, Miss Falconer’s first years were passed ; Mr. and Mrs. Ainsley were as partial to her as their children ; and when at the age of sixteen her fond parent was taken from her to receive the reward of her virtue whilst on earth, the poor motherless girl was pressed to take up her abode under the roof of these estimable friends.

“ Annie’s only remaining relative was Mrs. Willoughby, whom she had never seen. To that lady, Mr. Ainsley wrote soon after the decease of Mrs. Falconer ; mentioning the destitute state her daughter was left in, as her mother’s income being merely the pension allowed to a naval officer’s widow died with her : and by Annie’s earnest desire, he entreated Mrs. Willoughby to sanction her niece’s wish of employing her talents in some way likely to procure her an independence.

“ Mrs. Willoughby’s pride would not allow of her suffering her niece to enter any family as a governess; and angry with Mr. Ainsley for hinting such a thing to her, after some time given to reflection, she proposed to her husband, Annie’s living with them. He raised no obstacles to her wishes, but rather encouraged them : Mrs. Willoughby therefore wrote to Miss Falconer to join her immediately in London,

as it was her intention she should reside entirely with her.

To Mr. Ainsley she addressed a short letter concluded in the haughtiest terms, telling him that Annie Falconer, her brother's child, should never whilst his sister lived, demean herself or family by entering another in a subordinate station.

“ Mr Ainsley, happy his young favorite had a prospect of finding a home under her aunt's roof, forgave the spirit that dictated this epistle ; and in a few days after it had been received, the sweet girl left the friends whose house and arms had been opened to receive her, to live with relatives who, perfectly indifferent about her, merely suffered her to dwell with them, from not knowing where else to place her.

Mrs Willoughby treats her like an upper servant rather than as the daughter of

her brother ; and Barbara pretends to look down upon her, though more inclined to fear in her a powerful rival. Ormsby I suspect feels more regard for his beautiful cousin than either her sister or mother approve, but they need not alarm themselves on his account, as I believe the younger Ainsley has the entire possession of Annie's heart."

" I never heard the history of Miss Falconer before," said Sir Charles, who had appeared much interested whilst his daughter was relating it. " Where my Emily did you become acquainted with it. ? "

" Partly from herself," she returned ; " but you remember dear Papa, our meeting Maria Ainsley at the Ormingtons ? Aware of my knowing Miss Falconer, she was happy in being able to speak of one whom she so much admires and loves, and it

was from her I learnt the attachment of her brother to that interesting girl.

“What a pitiable situation is hers,” said Sophia. “I almost wonder, my dear Emily, your poor friend does not resolutely exert herself, and at once tell her aunt she will not submit to such treatment. Surely a situation as governess in some respectable family would be infinitely preferable to leading her present uncomfortable life.”

“You must, my dear cousin, become more acquainted with this sweet girl, before you are able to put yourself in her place. Notwithstanding the harshness with which she is treated by her aunt, she sees in her, an only relative, and the sister of her father. From infancy she has been taught to respect this unfeeling woman as the only branch left of his family; and though suffering from her unkindness, bears it all, rather than allow her heart to upbraid her, which

it would do, were she to consult her own inclinations, in direct opposition to Mrs. Willoughby's. Once or twice, she has ventured to express her wish of being permitted to turn her little accomplishments, (as she modestly terms them) to some account, but the cloud that arises the moment such a wish is expressed, threatening to end in a storm, is too alarming for the timid girl to brave it. "But," continued Emily, "I am chattering, when I ought to be preparing to attend my dear governess to Violet Lodge."

Mrs. Sedley, who had left the room before her *ci devant* pupil had entered upon the subject of Miss Falconer, now returned; and Emily, calling upon Sophia to accompany her, walked with this worthy woman to her pleasant cottage, and after remaining with her nearly an hour, the cousins returned homewards.

“ My dear Emily,” said Sophia, as they were on their way back, “ I wish you very much to excuse my attending you to this Ball on Thursday, for indeed I do not feel equal to the undertaking.”

“ Neither will I go then,” Emily returned ; “ for to confess the truth, I feel as little inclination to be present at it, as yourself.”

“ You have forgotten your guests.”

“ They will have Papa with them, and Annie Falconer will I know be happier at Woodley with us.”

“ No, my dear Emily,” cried Sophia ; “ this must not be : and I had rather encounter any fatigue than my kind uncle should have occasion to feel hurt with his daughter for slighting his friends.”

After a few pros and cons, it was settled, they would both make their appearance in the —— ball room, but if possible to avoid it, neither intended dancing that evening. Sophia had an excellent excuse for sitting still ; and Emily found one in not thinking it proper to leave her cousin in a room where she was an entire stranger.

CHAP. III.



An hour before dinner the following day, Mr. Willoughby's Barouche drove up to the door, in which were himself, and the females of his family ; his son, accompanied by his friend Captain Champinette, followed in tandem.

Emily received her father's friends with as much cordiality as she could assume ; Sophia was introduced to the party, and Captain Champinette, ever eager after fresh faces, declared in an audible whisper to

young Willoughby, she was the handsomest girl he had seen for some months.

Sophia was much pleased with Miss Falconer ; there was something so highly interesting about her, it was she thought impossible not to love her.

Miss Willoughby's face was an index of her mind, in which pride and envy strove for mastery. Ormsby was a fine young man, in whom perhaps appeared a little too much of the coxcomb ; but this was overlooked by those who appreciated his good qualities, or if they saw it, expressed their conviction that time would rectify this only defect in his character, whilst it brought to greater maturity his many virtues.

At dinner Captain Campinette sat by Sophia, to whom he paid such devoted attention, that it drove on him, not only the raillery of his friend, but the piercing eyes

of Miss Willoughby, which were turned upon him with no very amiable expression. Careless alike of the brother's quizzing, or the sister's frowns, he rattled on, till Sophia heartily sickened of the silly nothings he from time to time regaled her with, was happily released from attending to him, by Emily's making a movement and returning to the drawing room.

As soon as the ladies were retired, Captain Champinette filling his glass, intreated Sir Charles's permission to give Miss De Clairville for his toast, declaring he had never seen her equal for beauty in any country he had visited.

The Baronet, not a little amused with the unceremonious manner of his guest, readily acceded to his request ; and after drinking a bumper to the health of his niece, satisfied the anxious desire the youth expressed to learn where she came from.

Sir Charles sometime after, mentioned the Ball at—, expressing his hopes his guests would honor him by being present at it: delighted at finding any scheme of pleasure in agitation, the young officer became so much more than usually exhilarated, that Ormsby fearing for his discretion, prevailed upon him, though with some difficulty, to retire for the night, instead of joining the ladies in the drawing room.

The cousins and Miss Falconer passed an hour together after the rest of the family had retired, before they separated to their respective apartments.

Emily, questioning Annie on her present situation in her aunt's family, learned it was much the same as formerly. Mr. Willoughby and his son were uniformly kind to her, but she confessed Barbara's treatment often put her patience to some trial. It had been the wish of Mrs Ainsley

that she should have passed the last Christmas with them, but Mrs. Willoughby put a direct negative upon her niece's desire of being allowed such a gratification: notwithstanding Mr. Willoughby had offered to take her part of the way into Nottinghamshire. "I believe" observed Miss Falconer, "my aunt is desirous I should forget there are such beings in existence as the Ainsleys; but," she continued, her fine eyes raised to heaven, "she may as reasonably expect me to forget that parent who, though lost to me in this world, is ever present to my mind, as that I should forget those friends who were every thing to me, when that adored mother was taken from her child."

Emily and Sophia much affected, took each a hand of the desolate Annie; they spoke not, but the tender pressure they bestowed upon it, before it was relinquished by them, was felt and understood by her.

In the course of the next day, Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter gave many proofs of their ill-humour towards this interesting girl. When waiting for the carriages that were to convey the party to the Ball, Barbara observing her cousin had a small bouquet in her bosom, that was a great addition to her dress, desired her to give it to her. "You, I know Annie, believe," she added with a sneer as she placed the flowers in her own, "beauty such as yours requires not the aid of ornament."

"But if Miss Falconer is of a different opinion this evening," said Emily, excessively provoked at such malice; "I can supply her with some flowers equally beautiful as those she has so good-humouredly allowed you to take from her; and leaving the room as she finished speaking, soon returned with some of the most fragrant

her green house afforded ; and whilst assisting the lovely girl to arrange them, Sophia thought she had never seen her cousin look so handsome.

Ormsby Willoughby could scarcely refrain from expressing his admiration aloud, and had he not been engaged to dance the first set with his cousin, would have eagerly entreated her kind friend to become his partner.

Barbara pouted on perceiving the eyes of all resting on the sweet face of Emily with the strongest marks of approbation ; whilst she, perfectly unconscious of it, continued sedulously engaged about Miss Falconer.

Captain Champinette exerted all his eloquence to induce Sophia to alter her determination of not dancing that evening ; but finding it could not be shaken, he declared

his intention of following her example, to the evident mortification of Miss Willoughby, who had made herself sure of their military beau for one set, at least.

Sir Charles, expressing his wish to be in time to do the honors of his post, after he had accepted the office of Steward, the Woodley party entered the ball-room at an early hour. Amongst the group who arrived soon after them, Sophia discovered the elder Miss Deresford, and was almost the same instant recognized by that lady; who instantly came forward, and expressed the pleasure this unexpected meeting occasioned her. Sophia enquired for her brother and sister, and learned they, with herself, were visiting at a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood, and would soon make their appearance.

Emily and Sir Charles now approached, and whilst conversing with Miss Deres-

ford, Lord Deresford with his younger sister and others of the party arrived.

Lord Deresford expressed in the most animated terms his happiness at meeting Sophia where he so little expected it ; and almost before she could answer his enquiries after her family, offered himself to her for a partner the first set. On mentioning her intention of being merely a spectator that evening, he looked much disconcerted; till, fortunately recollecting he should have a better opportunity of conversing with her than had she been disposed to join the festive throng, his countenance brightened; and complaining of a pain in his ankle, which he feared would prevent his having the happiness of dancing with the sister of the gentleman at whose house he was visiting, he desired his sisters to apologize to their friend, and following Sophia to a seat gave himself up to the delightful gratification of attending solely to her.

At times there was an expression in Lord Deresford's countenance that reminded Sophia of his cousin ; this evening she was more struck with it than she had yet been ; and it had the effect of giving to her manner a more than usual softness, which did not escape her companion ; and hope instantly whispered she was not displeased by his marked attentions, which were observed by the greater part of the company, who gave it as their opinion his Lordship was completely fascinated, and that the niece of the Baronet had every chance of soon becoming a Viscountess.

Captain Champinette finding Sophia more inclined to attend to Lord Déresford than himself, soon tired of revolving round a planet in company with another satellite, entreated Sir Charles would introduce him to a partner ; which wish being complied with, he left the Viscount the happiness of entertaining his fair friend, without a third

person to interrupt him, or draw her attention for a moment from himself.

Lord Deresford, at the conclusion of the evening, requested Sophia's permission to call upon her the following morning; startled at the expression of his countenance as he made this request, and changing colour as her suspicions of his intentions for the first time came across her, she endeavoured in as firm a tone as she could command, to assure him her uncle would consider himself highly honored by receiving a visit from him; her change of countenance was construed by Lord Deresford to his own advantage, and as he led her to the carriage, he tenderly pressed her hand before he relinquished it, and in a voice equally expressive bade her good night.

Much hurt that he should be entertaining hopes which must end in disappoint-

ment, if as she dreaded, he would pay his intended visit at Woodley, Sophia continued absorbed in her uncomfortable reflections, till her arrival at the Park; when complaining of fatigue, she immediately retired to her apartment, whither she was soon followed by Emily; who perceiving something had occurred to agitate her, earnestly entreated to learn what it was.

Sophia in vain endeavoured to convince her nothing was the matter, but Emily would not believe it. “Do not,” she cried, “try to deceive me, I know something has occurred to vex you; perhaps Lord Deresford has been the messenger of evil tidings?”

Sophia unable longer to conceal the cause of her emotion from her cousin, said as she threw her arms around her, “I am indeed my dear Emily most wretched;

Lord Deresford is coming hither to-morrow in the full persuasion I am not indifferent to him; and if what I fear comes to pass, he will not leave Woodley till he has offered himself to one who cannot accept him."

"Cannot accept him! excuse me dear Sophia for smiling; and forgive me also, if I insinuate that the complacent manner with which you apparently attended to him this evening, when it was evident to us all he was conversing on interesting subjects, made me at least, believe his addresses would not be ill received by you."

"Ah Emily," returned her cousin, "how little are you aware of the state of my heart, if you believe for a moment I could think of Lord Deresford as you suppose."

Emily surprised, looked towards her, and saw the colour which had the moment

before suffused her countenance, recede as rapidly, and observing at the same time the nervous trembling that shook her whole frame, she felt greatly alarmed, and fearful for the consequences of such strong emotion on her already weakened health, urged her to retire immediately to rest. Sophia much exhausted, promised to comply with her wishes; and Emily after seeing her cousin into bed, and affectionately taking leave of her for the night, returned to the company below for a short time, and then repaired to her own apartment,

Emily continued some time after she was in bed to meditate upon the words that had escaped her cousin, in the violence of her agitation; and was almost convinced her suspicions relative to an attachment between Lord d'Arcy and Sophia had not been unfounded. She now attributed the latter's loss of spirits to that cause alone. But was it possible the ge-

neral favorite at Melcombe, had been acting a villain's part in winning the affections of an amiable young woman, without the intention of returning them? It was more probable his father had peremptorily interdicted him from forming a connection in her uncle's family. Emily recollected Mr. Leigh's observation during supper at the Ashmore ball, "that Lord Montreuil would rather see his son in his grave, than that he should connect himself with the daughter of a commoner;" and in this instance she feared her delectable partner had not asserted what was not strictly true.

Reflections similar to these prevented Emily from sleeping the greater part of the night, and fearing Sophia had not rested much better, she repaired to her chamber directly she was dressed, and was concerned to find her presentiment had been but too true. Sophia complained much of her head; her late pallid cheek

was now suffused with a crimson dye, which the heaviness of her eyes plainly indicated was far from being the hue of health.

Sir Charles, much alarmed at the account his daughter carried him of the evident indisposition of her cousin, instantly sent for a physician of eminence in the neighbourhood; who upon being admitted to his patient, attributed her great accession of fever to a violent cold, and hearing where she had been the last evening, felt convinced his first suspicions were just.

Emily severely blaming herself as the occasion of Sophia's illness, in having urged her to be of the party to the ball when she saw how much she wished to remain at home, now took her station in the sick room of her cousin, and alternately with Anna Falconer, watched the bed of the poor sufferer, who continued many days seriously ill.

Lord Deresford arrived at Woodley in the course of the first morning of Sophia's indisposition, and much alarmed at the account he received from Sir Charles of his niece's illness, his manner at the time would have laid open to all the state of his heart, had it not been before suspected. He entreated the Baronet's permission to call again on the morrow; but not contented with this being granted, sent his servant over in the evening that he might gain even earlier intelligence of the state of Sophia's health.

At the end of a week, she was able to be removed into Emily's dressing-room, and to receive a visit from her uncle who started at beholding her such a shadow of her former self. The medical gentleman however in some measure consoled him with the assurance that a few weeks would make a material alteration in his niece for the better.

Emily and Annie passed the greatest part of their time with her. Mrs. Willoughby had been prevailed on to allow the latter to remain at Woodley, when she left it to proceed to Town. Captain Champinette soon wearied of a spot where nothing was going forwards, made his bow the second day after the ball; and at the end of a week his example had been followed by the Willoughbys.

CHAP. IV.

Sophia had been several mornings out in the carriage attended by her friends, when as they were returning from one of these airings, they were overtaken by Lord Deresford then on his daily errand to Woodley.

Delighted at once more seeing her, he continued riding by the side of the carriage till it reached the house, when dismounting and giving his horse to his groom, he

offered his assistance to the ladies in descending from it.

Sophia yet weak had been accustomed to be carried by her uncle to the house on her return from a ride, but this day finding Sir Charles not at his usual post, she endeavoured to reach it, relying alone on her own exertions. Emily aware how unequal she was to the effort, desired the butler to assist her cousin, but Lord Deresford too quick for her, had, without waiting for Sophia's consent, lifted her out in his arms, nor released his lovely burden till he had seated her on a couch in the saloon.

Emily would not long permit his Lordship the happiness of conversing with her cousin, but begging her father who then entered to assist Sophia to her room, she followed her thither, leaving Miss Falconer to entertain their visiter.

Convinced Sophia had no heart to bestow on the Viscount, Emily was concerned to find he was encouraging hopes which must sooner or later be destroyed ; and began exceedingly to wish her cousin would give him an opportunity of speaking upon the subject, that his fate might be decided ; but on returning to the saloon, she heard him lamenting the necessity there was for his immediate return to Town ; and saw with regret the instantaneous change that took place from deep despondency to animated delight, when her father mentioned the probability of his niece's spending some weeks in the Metropolis with her friend Charlotte in the course of the spring.

Sophia being made acquainted with the unwilling departure of Lord Deresford from Hampshire, felt a weight removed from her mind which had the best effect upon her health. The physician was dis-

missed, she daily rode with her uncle and young friends on horse back, and was soon able to bear the exercise better than either of them.

A letter from Mrs. Singleton, entreating her to fix the time for coming to her, broke in upon the comparative tranquillity she was beginning to feel.

Little inclined to enter scenes which Charlotte described in such gay colouring to induce her friend to hasten to Town, Sophia would infinitely have preferred remaining where she was, but assured it was the wish of her parents, that she should accept Mrs. Singleton's invitation, she resolutely set about making preparations for her journey.

Emily was miserable at the idea of parting with her, but hoping the excursion

might be of material benefit to her spirits, she endeavoured as much as possible to banish self, and exerted herself to reconcile Sophia to their separation.

Sir Charles had promised his sister to escort his niece to Seymour Street; and three days after the arrival of Charlotte's letter, Sophia, accompanied by her uncle and Miss Falconer, left Woodley for London. Annie was set down at her aunt's door, and in a few minutes after, her young friend found herself in the warm embrace of Mrs. Singleton, who could scarcely express her joy at seeing her again.

The Major had dined from home, but returned early to enjoy the gratification of spending a quiet evening with his wife and her friends. Sophia was a great favorite with him, and it was impossible to be long in the society of Sir Charles without feeling attracted by the benevolence of his

fine countenance. He remained only one night in Town, when taking an affectionate leave of his niece, he hastened back to his Emily, with whom he had left her late worthy preceptress Mrs. Sedley.

Soon after Sir Charles had left them, Mrs. Singleton proposed taking Sophia shopping. "I do not mean to insinuate," she smilingly added, "that I have any fears of your not being properly equipped for an introduction into the great world, I merely wish to initiate you into the daily occupation of a fine town lady; but if you are not fascinated with their mode of killing time, or feel unwilling to follow their example, I will not press you to accompany me, when I feel disposed to take such beings for my model. In the evening you will see a few friends here. This night 'Mrs. Singleton is at home'."

“ You my dear Charlotte I perceive are already initiated into the mysteries of fashionable life,” said Sophia laughing.

“ A novice only at present,” she returned, “ and my good aunt Lady Singleton tells me, she fears I shall never arrive at that height she had, on first seeing me, prophesied I should attain, and I suspect feels rather mortified her pupil does her so little credit. You will see the old dowager at dinner; Clement also dines here, and—

“ May I hope,” interrupted Sophia, “ you were going to add he will be accompanied by his friend Mr. Leigh.”

“ Oh no; Mortimer dislikes your *Ba-boon* too much, to invite him to his table; at night, he probably will honor me by walking through my rooms. But who my dear Sophia,” Mrs. Singleton continued, “ do you think I met lately at a private

party? No less a personage than our friend Lord d'Arcy's father; his high mightiness the Lord Montrieul."

At hearing this, Sophia turned pale, and dreading next to learn the former was in Town, she walked to a window, affecting to be attracted by the different carriages passing. Mrs. Singleton not observing her friend's change of countenance, proceeded, "To me he appeared exactly the sort of man I had pictured to myself; haughty enough, I make no doubt, to those he considers his inferiors: but in company with noblemen of his own, or of superior rank, his manner assumes the highest polish; he is well informed, and his remarks upon the different manners and customs of the several courts he has had opportunity of observing, are highly entertaining. You perhaps wonder how your friend, the daughter and sister of a banker, could have had an opportunity of seeing

this, in general, arrogant peer to such advantage; the truth is, Mortimer when abroad had it in his power to be exceedingly useful to him, which, to do Lord Montrieul justice, he has not forgotten, and takes every opportunity of convincing my husband of it."

"Lady Montrieul you will much admire, should you meet with her during your stay in Town; your friend Lady Grace, hearing I expected you, desired me to assure you she intends taking the earliest opportunity of calling here after your arrival. Her mother's delicate state of health prevents her visiting much out of their own family circle. At present the family are at Longuiville House in —shire. I hear no more of the intended match between Lord d'Arcy and Lady Lucretia Selburne; it is indeed reported his Lordship is soon going abroad."

The carriage was now announced, and poor Sophia trembling with the emotion that name always occasioned, followed her lively friend to it.

The day being warm, the barouche was open, and whilst stopping at the door of a shop in Bond Street, two gentlemen approached the carriage, and were introduced by Mrs. Singleton to Sophia, as Colonel Marsden and Mr. Monthermer.

“ You are early this morning, my dear madam,” cried the former, addressing Charlotte.

“ Not too early for business, I hope, you will allow,” she returned, smiling.

“ What great business can Mrs. Singleton have to transact, than what the mornings of our modern dames are usually devoted to?

“ And pray, my good friend, allow me to enquire what brings you hither every day you continue in this Metropolis? If it is business, I pity you from my heart, as it must be so perplexed you can, I fear, entertain little hope of its ever coming to a conclusion.”

“ Fairly retorted, Monthermer,” said Colonel Marsden laughing; “ I believe indeed my dear Mrs. Singleton, we may attribute my friend’s so constantly haunting this, and the adjoining streets, to the same cause that brings hither so many of both sexes: viz. to kill their bitterest enemy *Time*; but how, and where is the Major?”

“ He is very well,” returned his wife; but not yet feeling himself reduced to the same necessity you affirm so many are, of lounging away their time on this pave-

ment, is at the present moment shut up in his library with a favorite author."

"His hours are occupied in far worthier pursuits, I indeed believe," returned the Colonel, "unless he is much altered since he left our regiment."

"Of that I can be no judge," cried Charlotte; "but you will dine with us to day?"

"I hope to have that honor."

"Mr. Monthermer is I know better engaged," she added.

"That I assert to be impossible," he returned, bowing with affected solemnity; "but should I make one amongst your dear five hundred friends this evening, is there any hope I may be recognized by you?"

“ Amongst so many,” she answered, smiling, “ you can scarcely expect to be noticed with more than a how d’ye do.”

Mr. Monthermer assured her a smile alone would satisfy him, and then reminding his companion it was time to pay their respects at Lady N—’s levee, the gentlemen made their parting compliments, and the ladies after finishing their shopping returned home.

On Charlotte’s mentioning to the Major whom they had seen that morning, he told Sophia he was assured his friend Marsden’s was a character she would approve.

“ His physiognomy impressed me very much in his favor,” she answered, “ but I am too apt to form my judgment on that alone, and have but too often found my skill in the *Lavaterian* science delusive.”

“ In this instance I flatter myself you

will not have found it so. But what thought you of Monthermer?"

"That he is a little too satirical, but pardon me, I saw not enough of that gentleman to form any opinion, whether good or bad."

"You mean to say," said Mrs. Singleton, "your eyes had sufficient employment in tracing the virtues depicted in the countenance of his friend, to find any time to make your observations on himself; but as I have had the happiness of the latter gentleman's acquaintance, from the first week of my arrival in Town, you shall be benefited my dear Sophia with the opportunity I have had of investigating his character. Mr Monthermer then is, as you suspected, somewhat inclined to satire, and never omits applying his lash where ever he thinks it wanted. He is devoted to poetry, but notwithstanding he professes

himself as great an enthusiast in his admiration of Cowper as yourself, I suspect *Pope* is much more to his taste: not but that your favorite bard can be sometimes a little too severe. You heard Monthermer allude to a line, where he accuses us all indiscriminately of inviting our dear five hundred friends at the time we profess to hate their coming."

"*Hate*, is I trust too harsh a word for my Charlotte to make use of," said the Major smiling upon her ; "but am I my love far from the truth, in suspecting the nights your rooms are opened to so miscellaneous a group, are not more relished by yourself then they are by me ? "

"You are indeed correct. Lady Singleton on my first arrival was so urgent for my giving into the mode of living, practised she said by all who had pretensions to fashion, that wishing not to be singular, I

consented to be guided by her ; but if you, my dear Mortimer, dislike all this as much as I do, I see no reason we should sacrifice our own ideas of happiness to the caprice of others."

"We will my love," returned her husband, "indulge my aunt for this season ; the next you will find yourself at liberty to do that which pleases you best ; as ere that arrives, another and another young married woman will have made their appearance on the fashionable horizon ; who will so entirely occupy all Lady Singleton's thoughts, she will find little time to attend to you."

"I earnestly hope my dear friend your predictions may be verified ; but we must not detain Sophia any longer from the duties of the toilet: who knows the effect her charms may produce upon the hearts of our beaux this evening ?"

“Or upon the hearts of those who will this day honor us with appearing at our table,” said the Major.

Sophia laughing, assured her friendly hosts she would make a point of calling in the assistance of every friendly sylph whose office it was to attend the toilet of the fair; that she might not disappoint their expectations; particularly those of Charlotte, who had prophesied she would in the course of that evening have at least half a score earls and baronets at her feet.

Mrs. Singleton laughing called her a saucy girl, and holding up her watch desired she would remark the little time there was left for her to invoke the sylphs in; then taking her arm, she accompanied her friend to the door of her dressing-room, and expressing her hopes the little sprites would be found disengaged, and willing to attend her summons, she left her, and repaired to her own apartment.

CHAP. V.



In the drawing-room, Sophia found besides Colonel Marsden and Clement Warburton, two other gentlemen, officers in Major Singleton's regiment. Colonel Marsden soon approaching her, said, "I ought to apologize to Miss De Clairville for having omitted to enquire after her brother, whom I had the pleasure of meeting last summer in Cambridgeshire."

Sophia delighted at finding her first acquaintance in London, a friend of Edward's,

gave the Colonel her whole attention, and learning from the latter he had spent a week with her brother during the last summer vacation, at a gentleman's house in the vicinity of Cambridge, she made many enquiries relative to the individuals of the family under whose roof they had met: but finding it consisted only of the master and mistress, and a son who was a fellow student with Edward, the suspicion that had crossed her mind of their being in any way implicated in his evident unhappiness, quickly vanished; and she was on the point of enquiring of Colonel Marsden, whether any other families resided near the Gressingtons, with whom he or her brother were acquainted, when Major Singleton's enquiry of what had become of Mr. Gressington's niece, interrupted her.

“Miss Buckby was not at R—” replied Colonel Marsden, “at the time I am speaking of, but I met her in the park a few

days since, and was sorry to observe she appeared to be in a very delicate state of health.

“ I am extremely sorry to hear this,” returned the major ; Maria is a charming girl, and so deservedly the darling of her friends, that any apprehensions of losing her would be a source of serious grief to them ; but I trust this lovely young woman is not so ill as you, my dear Marsden, appear to think her.

“ I greatly fear Colonel Marsden’s apprehensions are but too well founded,” observed a gentleman present : “ Miss Buckby’s appearance is evidently consumptive, and I am led to believe an unfortunate attachment is hastening this interesting young woman to an early grave.

“ Can it be possible,” exclaimed Major Singleton, “ that Maria Buckby has given

her affections to one insensible of their value? Have you not my dear Miss De Clairville," he continued, turning to Sophia "heard your brother mention this celebrated beauty?"

"Never!" she replied, "and I therefore conclude he has not the pleasure of knowing her. Edward's acquaintance with Mr. Gressington is not, I should suppose, a very intimate or a long established one, as I was not aware, till Colonel Marsden mentioned the circumstance, he visited the family."

Sophia observed a slight smile pass across the countenance of the gentleman who had before spoken, as she said this; but a summons to dinner, and the consequent separation of the party, prevented her ascertaining the cause of it; and during the time she remained at table, Colonel Marsden's never failing talent for conversation

allowed her not to dwell upon the subject which had been previously discussed, till she returned with Mrs. Singleton to the drawing-room ; when it was brought to her recollection, by her friend's suddenly exclaiming, " I strongly suspect Edward to be the thief who has stolen Miss Buckby's heart : nay my dear Sophia," she continued, observing the latter start, " he could not help the young lady's great susceptibility, and we who know he had no heart to offer her in return, must be convinced that poor Maria's has 'unsought been won.' "

Sophia made no comments on this conjecture of Charlotte's, but continued for some minutes so deep in thought, that Mrs. Singleton after rallying her upon it, continued, " and I am not without my suspicions from the alteration, which I observe has taken place in you since we parted in February, dear Damon left at Woodley, is the

occasion of it. Now candidly confess my dear Sophia, have I not guessed right? "

" I was not aware of being so much altered since the time you speak of," she returned, blushing deeply: but Woodley must not be accused of being the cause of it."

" He is not then to be found there," said Charlotte laughing. " Ah Sophia," she continued, shaking her head, and looking archly at her blushing friend, " it is then the knight of the *blue ribbon* who has so strangely metamorphosed my former lively companion."

Sophia attempted to deny this charge; but her countenance too plainly told her friend her suspicions were this time correct, and unwilling to continue a subject

she perceived was distressing to her companion, she changed the conversation.

A loud knock at the door announced the arrival of Lady Singleton, who, her niece had a few minutes before been expressing her surprize, had not earlier made her appearance.

Lady Singleton was the daughter of a rich woollen draper in the city, who, dying soon after she had attained her one and twentieth year, left her the entire possession of his immense property, which had been accumulating the greater part of his life.

Sir Clement Singleton, finding it impossible to raise any more money on estates that had decended to him free from any mortgage, but which by a passion for the turf he had burthened with very heavy ones, began to think it expedient to set about retrieving

his affairs in the best manner it was now possible for him to do: and none appearing so easy to him as taking possession of the hundred thousand pounds of the good old draper, with the incumbrance attached to it, he in a few months after the death of the worthy cit, made proposals in form to his daughter, and was immediately accepted.

Vain of her title, Lady Singleton no longer condescended to associate with her former friends, but eagerly sought to ingratiate herself with those she was persuaded were her equals. The cool reception her advances met with from some, she either did not, or would not notice; but happily there were others who had no objection to assist her Ladyship in arranging her parties, or with their advice in furnishing the rooms that were appropriated to receiving them, in the most expensive style.

Sir Clement perfectly indifferent to his wife, allowed her to please herself in the manner she liked best, provided he had but money for his own private uses ; till finding her creditors beginning to be equally clamorous with his own, he insisted upon her retiring with him into the country, and soon leaving her to enjoy its amusements alone, returned to those pleasures he felt it impossible to exist without partaking of.

On the death of Sir Clement, his son, (the only issue of this *disinterested* marriage,) found on taking possession of his estates, that notwithstanding a great part of his mother's fortune had been employed in paying off the mortgages, they were now burthened with fresh ones. The young Baronet therefore determined upon putting them out to nurse for some years, and obtaining through the interest of a friend in power, a lucrative situation in

the East Indies, in less than four months subsequent to his father's death he left England, after taking every precaution his mother's jointure should be punctually paid.

Sir Clement had been dead two years, and his widow finding her present confined income would not allow of her living in the same style she had been accustomed to, when last in London, hoped by making herself useful to young married women on their first entering into life, to find her account in it. She succeeded in her design, and was at this time in the habit of being applied to by many for her advice in arranging their parties, &c. Their houses were always open to her Ladyship, and indeed, nothing could be done until *dear* Lady Singleton's approbation was obtained. Her Ladyship had not waited for Charlotte's making any application to her, but had generously offered her services on

her niece's first coming to Town; and Mrs. Singleton, out of respect to her husband's aunt, allowed herself in some measure to be directed by her.

“ My dear niece,” cried her Ladyship as she condescendingly held out her little finger to her on her entrance; “ I am extremely concerned it was not in my power to dine with you to day; but I was prevented by my young friend Mrs. Montague's sending to entreat I would go to her for half an hour, as she much wished to consult me upon a ball she intends giving in a few weeks. The subject interested us so much, I was surprised on consulting my watch, to find the hour for your dinner elapsed, but fully assured you would make every allowance for the importance of the business that detained me, I suffered myself to be prevailed upon to take my morsel in Cavendish square.

Charlotte, begging her Ladyship would not think any apology necessary, introduced her friend to her ; and Lady Singleton after expressing the pleasure the introduction gave her, enquired if this was Miss De Clairville's first Spring in London.

Mrs Singleton, after answering in the affirmative, said, "and I trust, my dear madam, you will assist me in making her *debut* brilliant."

Lady Singleton much struck with the beauty of Sophia, promised to do all in her power to render it so ; and when the rooms began to fill, and she was assailed from all quarters with the enquiry of, "who is that lovely girl with Mrs. Singleton ? she was gratified in having it supposed her niece's friend was also hers ; and in being able to answer these numerous enquiries with the information, that this elegant young stranger was the daughter of

Edward De Clairville of Melcombe Lodge in —shire, and sister to the much admired Mrs. Howard.

Sophia found Colonel Marsden a pleasant well informed man, who had seen a great deal of the world, and had profited by the time spent in it. He amused her with describing the characters of many of the company, the far greater part of which she now saw for the first time.

Sophia was much entertained with the succession of new faces that were constantly entering, as others contented with merely shewing themselves, retired to make room for these fresh importations; one of whom was Mr. Monthermer, who immediately approaching that part of the room where Sophia was conversing with Colonel Marsden, was so much pleased with the native spirit that even yet at times appear-

ed in the conversation of the former, though the brilliancy that used to animate her fine countenance was now seldom visible, that feeling no inclination to stray farther, he kindly assisted his friend in finding subjects to entertain their fair companion with.

Mr. Leigh, as Mrs. Singleton expected, made his appearance in the course of the evening. Mr. Monthermer pointed him out to Sophia, as he sat in his usual affected attitude of ease, his favorite pocket mirror in one hand, whilst the other was employed in raising a small ivory tooth-pick inlaid with gold to his mouth, which was extended to its greatest dimensions, that his white teeth might be seen to advantage. "Is not this the man," said he smiling, "whom Cowper had in his eye when he says,

" You think perhaps so delicate his dress,

" His daily fare as delicate. Alas!

" He picks clean teeth, and busy as he seems

" With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet."

“ You do not I hope, Monthermer,” returned Colonel Marsden, “ denominate that glittering instrument a tavern quill ?

Sophia laughing, confessed these lines described the foppish appearance of the little man, but added, “ Mr. Monthermer is not perhaps aware the gentleman to whom he has applied them, is the son of a senior partner in one of the largest banking-houses in this metropolis.”

Mr. Monthermer directing a droll look towards her, said, “ I certainly was not aware of the gentleman’s being a friend of Miss De Clairville’s, and one she evidently feels much interested for, but may I hope I have not irretrievably ruined myself in her good opinion by my folly ?

Sophia had only time allowed to promise to overlook this offence, before Mr. Leigh, who had just discovered her, ad-

vanced to make enquiries after her health and that of her family. He then entreated to learn if there was any hope of his seeing Miss Rushbrook that spring in Town ; upon hearing there was not any, he lamented it very grievously, declaring he thought Sir Charles was much to be blamed for not allowing his elegant daughter to mix in scenes her birth entitled her to partake of.

Sophia vainly endeavoured to convince him, remaining at Woodley was entirely the choice of her cousin ; he would not believe it possible, “ at all events Miss De Clairville, you will allow,” he continued, finding Sophia tired of the subject, remained silent, “ at all events you will allow no one appeared to enjoy the gaieties going forward at Ashmore more than your cousin.”

“ More than you did at all events, my dear sir,” cried Mrs. Singleton, who at

that minute joined the party ; “ at least,” she continued, looking archly, “ rather more than you appeared to relish that unlucky fall you met with on the evening of the ball.”

Mr. Leigh coloured highly at Charlotte’s reverting to his accident on that night ; but aware he had no redress, he suddenly recollected having something of great moment to impart to a gentleman present, whom he affected to go in search of.

The moment he was gone, Mr. Monthermer requested to hear the history of the little beau’s fall, and Mrs. Singleton gratified him by giving a ludicrous description of what had amused her so much in his behaviour whilst at Ashmore, which entertained her auditors exceedingly. In recounting the disaster that befel poor Mr. Leigh on the evening of the ball, Lord d’Arcy as being in some measure the oc-

casion of it was named, and Colonel Marsden almost directly enquired whether Mrs. Singleton had seen his Lordship lately. Upon her returning an answer in the negative, he added, " I understand he does not intend to take his trip over to the Continent, until he can carry his bride with him."

" His bride !" cried Mr. Monthermer, " you do not mean to insinuate Lord d'Arcy is upon the point of commencing Benedict ? "

" It is so reported," returned his friend, and that every thing being settled between the parties, in a few days the papers will announce the marriage of Arthur Lord d'Arcy with one of the beautiful and accomplished daughters of the house of Longuiville."

Mrs. Singleton, dreading the effect this

intelligence might produce upon Sophia, endeavoured to turn the attention of the gentlemen from her by pointing to two ladies who then entered, and enquired whether they were not Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter.

Sophia, feeling herself change colour at hearing the marriage of Lord d'Arcy with Lady Lucretia, spoken of as a thing decided, and fearing her emotion would be observed, took possession of a vacant chair near a card-table and affected to be much interested in the game which was playing, till she was sufficiently recovered to enter again into conversation with her two beaux, who still continued their station by her side ; but happily their attention had been diverted from her by Charlotte's enquiry, and in a few minutes after she was approached by Ormsby Willoughby, who with Captain Champinette had accompa-

nied his mother and sister to Mrs. Singleton's assembly. After congratulating her upon her recovery from her severe illness, and expressing the pleasure the meeting her in Town afforded him, Ormsby continued, "I was commissioned by my cousin, to say every thing from her that was affectionate to you, but fearful I conjecture that I should not acquit myself to her satisfaction, she put into my hands a few minutes before I left the house this little billet, and most happy I shall be, if after perusing its contents you will honor me by making me the bearer of an answer to it."

Sophia thanked him, but declined accepting his kind offer, as it was her intention to call upon Miss Falconer the next morning.

Captain Champinette was introduced by his friend to Mrs. Singleton, with whom he appeared as much charmed as he had

been with Sophia. In the course of conversation the young officer enquired when the latter was to become Lady Deresford, and upon Charlotte's desiring him to explain his meaning, he assured her, in Hampshire it was confidently asserted as a done thing ; and that Lord Deresford had given the necessary directions to his coachmaker, &c. &c. and that the family jewels were new setting, and others were to be added to them for his Lordship to present his bride on their nuptials.

“ Your intelligence has indeed surprised me,” returned Mrs. Singleton, “ as this is the first hint I have received of such a thing being in agitation.”

“ You have my word of honor,” he replied, “ I have asserted nothing but what is strictly true ; and between ourselves, it would not methinks be amiss to put my noble Colonel on his guard, whose admi-

ration of Lord Deresford's intended wife is evident to every one."

Charlotte advised his mentioning to Colonel Marsden Sophia's engagement to the Viscount, as soon as possible, and then left him to speak to a lady she had not before observed was present.

Mrs. Willoughby and her daughter complimented Sophia on her recovered looks, and expressed the pleasure it would give them to see her in'—street. She enquired for Annie, and was answered she was too much indisposed to venture out. Shocked at such deviation from truth, as she had heard from Ormsby the real reason of his cousin's not accompanying his mother and sister to Mrs Singleton's, Sophia's countenance would probably have betrayed the doubts she entertained of their veracity, had not Major Singleton approached to tell her he had just heard from a

gentleman present, Lady Grace Montrieu arrived in Town the preceding evening. Thanking him for the pleasing intelligence, she forgot Mrs. Willoughby, and was beginning to calculate the time she might expect to see her friend, when Mr. Monthermer's enquiry what her opinion of her Ladyship was, interrupted her.

“Report,” he continued, “speaks of her as something above the common run of titled young women.”

“Graceful to sight, and elegant in thought,
The great are vanquished and the wise are taught,
Her breeding finish'd, and her temper sweet,
When serious easy, and when gay discreet.”

“Go on,” cried Major Singleton, “your description of Lady Grace is perfectly correct; is it not Miss De Clairville?”

“Perfectly so,” she returned, smiling.

“Come then Monthermer,” he continued, “let us hear what follows.”

“Pardon me my good friend,” returned that gentleman, “the genius that inspired me has fled, and with it you have put every poetical idea to flight, poor Mr. Pope with the rest; and see! you have drawn upon me the eyes of all the ladies, who will never forgive my praise of one of their sex, should it not even be at the expence of the rest.”

“You are a vain dog, Monthermer,” exclaimed Colonel Marsden. “Indeed I much doubt if any of the fair nymphs present, value your good opinion in the least.”

Mr. Monthermer contented himself with answering this speech with a low bow.

This whole evening Miss De Clairville

has been kept prisoner by you two selfish beings ; ” said the Major ; “ but I now insist upon your setting her free,” and offering his arm to Sophia which she readily accepted, they walked through the room, Colonel Marsden and Mr. Monthermer attending in their suit. The former enquired if Miss De Clairville intended being at the Opera the following Saturday ?

Sophia answered she believed it was Mrs. Singleton’s present intention.

“ It is,” said the Major ; “ We dine with the Montgomerys, and accompany them to the Haymarket. There will be room for you in Mrs. Montgomery’s box, if you are inclined to join our party, as I heard her say she had tickets to spare.” Colonel Marsden expressed the pleasure this intelligence occasioned him, and said he would call in Portland Place and secure one for that evening.

Sophia on retiring for the night, finding her spirits far too agitated to sleep, dismissed her servant, and taking up a volume of poetry her friend Charlotte had that morning put into her hands, she tried to interest herself in the perusal of it ; but in vain : and throwing the book aside, she opened her writing desk with the intention of beginning a letter to her mother, when the note Ormsby Willoughby had given her from Miss Falconer, returned to her recollection ; ashamed at its having escaped her memory so long, Sophia broke the seal, and after reading its contents continued holding it in her hand, and scarcely conscious of what she was about had twisted it into a hundred shapes, when her eye caught sight of a letter on her dressing table : wondering where and whom it came from, she threw away poor Annie's note, and snatching it eagerly up, perceived it was the hand writing of Lady Grace. Fully expecting it contained the intelligence of her brother's

marriage, she opened the letter with a trembling hand and read as follows.

“ And can it be possible my dear Sophia
“ should have been in Town four and
“ twenty hours, and I not yet have seen
“ her ! yet such is the fact. My Mother,
“ aware of my anxiety to be with you,
“ would have permitted my leaving her this
“ morning ; but she has been very ill, and
“ is yet so far from convalescent, that I
“ could not quit her even to visit you. Here
“ is some mystery I cannot penetrate, for
“ when I mentioned to my revered parent
“ my intention of sending to request you
“ would wave ceremony, as I was under
“ the necessity of remaining at home and
“ come to me, she earnestly intreated me
“ to give up my design. Dearest Sophia
“ do not allow yourself to feel hurt with
“ my mother ; she loves you already, and
“ will listen to me for hours when my friend
“ is the subject of conversation ; except

“ when my father or Arthur is present,
“ then your name is never mentioned by
“ her ; and at times she has entreated me
“ to be silent upon it. One day that I was
“ alone with the former, he made several
“ enquiries about your family, and of your-
“ self in particular, and listened with appa-
“ rent attention as I launched out in the
“ praise of those I so dearly love ; but
“ since that morning he has never expressed
“ any desire to learn further particulars.

“ Arthur is visiting a friend not far from
“ Town, at whose house he intends con-
“ tinuing some weeks. My Father is
“ anxious to see him in parliament, and
“ has expressed a wish that he would offer
“ himself a candidate for —, which is ex-
“ pected soon to be vacated by one of its
“ present members. But my brother has
“ fixed his mind on going abroad, and
“ unlike himself, turns away from all my
“ father’s remonstrances, who has several

“ times entreated him not to leave the kingdom at present.

“ I cannot help thinking Arthur’s altered manner has affected my mother’s health. If he has any secret uneasiness preying upon his mind, I blame him for keeping it to himself ; but whatever it is, it must have arisen since he left Melcombe, as we all know my dear Sophia how cheerful he was there.

“ The Marquis of Ormondsty gave me to understand before he left Town, he was not ignorant of the cause to which Arthur’s loss of spirits might be attributed: but when I earnestly begged him to impart the knowledge of it to me, he laughed off the subject, and since that time I have had no opportunity of questioning him on it. The Deresford’s are arrived from Bath. Ah ! Sophia, you are very sly, but I have heard of your meeting in

“ Hampshire. Could I think it possible
“ my father’s coldness towards your family
“ originated from any averseness to
“ George’s forming a connexion with it,
“ I should indeed be sorry for his idle pre-
“ judices, but great as I am aware they are,
“ I cannot believe him blind to the happi-
“ ness of his nephew, which would be en-
“ sured by an union with my friend. God
“ bless you my dearest ophia. I live in
“ the hope we shall meet soon.

“ Yours with the greatest sincerity,

G. M.”

Sophia sighed as she concluded this affectionate letter, from the sister of Lord d’Arcy; now too plainly foreseeing the prejudices of the Earl were not to be shaken. She felt some surprise that Lady Grace entertained no suspicion of her being implicated in the mystery she alluded to,

which it was evident the Marquis of Ormondsty had penetrated.

Before she allowed herself to think of rest, Sophia returned an answer to her friend; and then endeavouring to banish her and those nearly connected with her, from her mind, she retired to bed, and worn out with fatigue both of mind and body, at length fell into a refreshing sleep, from which she did not awake till a late hour the following morning.

CHAP. VI.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Singleton at breakfast, accused Sophia of having kept from her the knowledge of her supposed engagement with Lord Deresford. "It was not thus," she continued, "I treated you, when I had once made up my mind to accept Mortimer: you, next to my parents, were let into the secret; but in return for the confidence then reposed in you, you allow every one to learn your intended change of name, before your friend."

Sophia assured her if such a report, as she alluded to, was in circulation, it was totally without foundation : adding, “ I will not my dear Charlotte allow myself to believe for a single instant, you have given credit to it ; as you must be convinced, had there been any truth in it, I should not have permitted you to remain ignorant of it.”

“ You are not I hope,” said Mrs. Singleton, “ trying to deceive me ? ”

“ If I believed you suspected me of such a design, I should feel inclined to be very angry with you.”

“ Well, well,” returned her friend laughing, “ I promise to give full credit to your assertions. You know I suppose, we dine to day with aunt Singleton’s favorite, Mrs. Montague ; and in the evening ought to look in upon the Chudleighs : but as you have lately been so very ill, perhaps it will

be more prudent to return home from — street.”

Sophia was prevented answering, by the entrance of Major Singleton, just returned from his morning's ride, which he usually took before breakfast: he shook hands with her, as he made the usual enquiries after her health, when observing her loss of colour, he expressed his fears the strength of his fair guest was not yet sufficiently re-established to bear much raking.

Sophia assured him she did not feel the worse for her late hour of retiring the preceding evening, and then mentioning her wish of calling on Miss Falconer before the Willoughby's were visible; Mrs. Singleton ordered the carriage, and giving her friend an hour's law, promised to send or call for her, at the expiration of that time.

On enquiring for Mrs. Willoughby and

her daughter, Sophia was informed they were not yet stirring, but upon mentioning Miss Falconer's name, the servant appearing surprised, said, he believed she was at home, and upon sending in her card, Sophia was, as she expected, instantly admitted.

“ My dear Miss De Clairville,” cried Annie, as she flew to meet her, “how kind is this to think so soon of me, when your time must be so fully occupied : had you come an hour later ; my aunt, and cousin, would have been ready to receive your visit, and had I been permitted to have caught a glimpse at you, I could not then have said half I wished.

Sophia confessed her principal inducement for making her visit so early, was the hope of passing an hour with her, free from all restraint. She then enquired if there

was any chance of Mrs. Willoughby's allowing her to spend a day with her in Seymour street

Poor Annie shaking her head mournfully replied, " I must not expect so much happiness ; but let me not give way to vain regret, the short time I shall have the pleasure of being with you. Did Ormsby deliver my note ? "

" He did ; and at the same time his countenance plainly evinced, the sympathy he feels for you."

" Excellent, Ormsby. Would it were in my power to return his kindness."

Sophia smiling said, " and are you sure my dear Annie, he cannot point out the way to you ? "

" I know what you allude to," returned

Miss Falconer blushing, "but that is indeed totally out of my power; you would pity me," she continued, "were you aware of the daily trials I meet with on his account. My aunt, thinking it impossible any woman would reject the offered hand of her son, feels convinced I am clandestinely encouraging my cousin, whilst I am endeavouring to persuade her his attentions are displeasing to me. Her suspicions have been imparted to Mr. Willoughby, who no longer treats me with that uniform kindness he has hitherto done; and my aunt I now believe, would be easily induced to part with me, if a proper situation offered itself to my acceptance. Excuse my dwelling so long on the subject, my dear friend, which I certainly should not have done, had not a hope arisen, you might be able to recommend the poor Annie Falconer to some family, who are in search of a governess."

Sophia promised to write immediately to her eldest sister, who she thought might have it in her power to be of service in the present instance: and grieved to find the cruel treatment Annie met with from relatives, who ought to have supplied the loss of her parents, made it necessary for her to seek another home, she invited her to return with her to Melcombe, till a situation offered that might suit her to accept.

Grateful for such kindness, Miss Falconer nevertheless declined profiting by it. "No," she continued, "I will not allow my aunt to suppose I wish to leave her from any other cause than a desire to seek an independency; and should this be granted me, I may be able at some future time to remember my dear Miss De Clairville's kind invitation; and if you will condescend to receive a governess at Melcombe, take advantage of it, and have the gratifica-

tion of finding myself making a part of your amiable family."

Sophia affectionately pressing her hand assured the interesting girl, in whatever character Annie Falconer presented herself, she would be received there with the most unfeigned delight.

It was settled before they parted that Sophia should call again as soon as her sister's answer arrived ; in the interim Annie intended sounding her Aunt on the subject, and if she found her disposed to make little opposition to her wishes, she was then to mention her expectations of soon hearing of a situation that might suit her.

Not many minutes after these arrangements had been made, Mrs. Singleton's carriage was announced ; and Sophia leaving her compliments for Mrs. Willoughby and Barbara, and taking an affectionate

leave of her friend, returned to Seymore street.



At Mrs. Montague's, the conversation turned on the exhibition, which was expected that season to be adorned with the productions of some of the most celebrated masters. Colonel Marsden, who was present, hearing Sophia express the gratification she anticipated from the sight of them, proposed to Mrs. Singleton their making a party to Somerset House, the first morning the rooms were opened for the reception of company. Charlotte cheerfully assenting, he, with Mr. Monthermer called in Seymore street early in the following week, and had the happiness of escorting Mrs. Singleton and her friend to the place appointed.

A gentleman passed them as they were

ascending the stairs of Somerset House, whom Charlotte instantly recognised for Lord Deresford : and calling him by name, said, “ Whither so fast my Lord, that you cannot find time to speak to an old friend? ”

Lord Deresford on hearing himself addressed, turned back, and perceiving it was Mrs. Singleton who had spoken, instantly joined her; and after enquiring for the Major, mustered sufficient courage to ask when she expected Miss De Clairville in Town.

Charlotte observing Sophia with Colonel Marsden had preceded her to the rooms above ; replied carelessly “ Oh ! I have left off all expectations of her coming.” Then much diverted at observing the evident disappointment visible on the countenance of the Viscount, at receiving this intelligence, she was continuing to lead

him further astray, when Colonel Marsden returned and entreated to know what had detained her so long ; adding “ Miss De Clairville, apprehensive something had occurred to prevent your joining her, sent me to learn what it was.”

Lord Deresford waiting to hear no more, instantly rushed forward, and soon discovering the object of his search, was presently by the side of Sophia.

The latter had the minute before, observed a gentleman within a few yards of her, regarding her with the most fixed attention, whose likeness to his son, convinced her, it must be Lord Montreuil himself : wondering how it was possible he could have discovered who she was, and feeling thoroughly uncomfortable in being the object of such earnest scrutiny, the appearance of Lord Deresford was a relief to her ; and had she not perceived by the warmth of his

address, that absence had not contributed to lessen her influence over him, Sophia would have greeted him with a smile of welcome : but not daring to give a shadow of encouragement to one, who evidently was on the watch for the slightest marks of it, she endeavoured to divert the attention of her admirer from herself, by directing it to another object ; and pointing to a portrait near her, desired to hear his Lordship's opinion of it.

Lord Deresford in following the direction of Sophia's eyes, encountered his uncle's ; who smiling significantly, made a sign to his nephew he wished to speak with him: and Mrs. Singleton joining her friend at the same moment, Lord Deresford left her, to attend the summons of the Earl.

Sophia feeling desirous of taking another glance at Lord d'Arcy's father, perceived

him making some enquiries of his nephew relative to her, as the eyes of both were directed to the spot she was standing on : feeling considerably agitated, and fearful her friend would observe it, she pretended to be much struck with a painting, and stopping to examine it, recovered herself a little.

Amongst the groupe of fashionables, Mrs. Singleton distinguished Lady Grace Montreuil, and the sisters of Lord Deresford : but before she had time to impart her discovery to Sophia, Lady Grace had recognised the latter, and springing forward regardless of every impediment, was the next moment with her friend. “ My dear Sophia,” she began, almost gasping from the delight this meeting occasioned her, “ this is what I dared not expect ; tell me whether you are quite recovered from the serious indisposition I have just learned you were confined to your chamber with, at Woodley.”

Sophia assured her, she felt no further ill effects from it ; but her ladyship remarking she had lost much of her fine bloom, entreated she would take care of herself. “ It is now my turn to preach,” she said. “ Remember the numerous cautions, you were in the habit of giving your friend, last winter at Melcombe.”

The Miss Deresfords now interrupted their cousin, by coming forward and expressing the pleasure this meeting with Sophia gave them ; and after mentioning their intention of calling upon her the next day, the elder sister enquired if she had yet noticed the different portraits of a nobleman, who had so much distinguished himself of late in the literary world.

Upon receiving an answer in the negative, Miss Deresford pointed to one at a little distance which done by —, was con-

sidered a very fine painting, and a striking resemblance of the original.

Sophia, feeling desirous of contemplating the picture of this youthful bard, whose works she had read with so much pleasure, would have indulged herself some time longer, in studying the character of a countenance, which had not disappointed the expectations she had formed of it, had not Lady Grace withdrawn her attention by desiring her to direct it to a portrait opposite, and then tell her if it was not as highly finished as the one she had been so much admiring.

Sophia, expecting to see another painting of the same nobleman, turned towards it; but in its place perceived a most animated and striking representation of Lord d'Arcy.

Her involuntary exclamation at a sight so unexpected, startled Lady Grace ; whose surprize was not lessened by observing the emotion of her friend, as she continued to contemplate the picture of her brother. In an instant the truth darted across her mind, and at once solved the mystery she had been so long endeavouring to penetrate ; but fearful Sophia should observe she had noticed her agitation, she said, “ I need not enquire if you are as much struck as myself with the likeness of this picture to Arthur, your countenance informs me you are equally so ; and now if you have no objection I will take you a little farther, to shew you a miniature of my mother, which is I think quite as well done.”

Sophia not daring to trust her voice, lest it should betray the emotion she so much wished to hide, in silence followed her friend to the apartment where the picture

of Lady Montrieul was placed. Lord Deresford almost immediately after joined them, and telling his cousin her father was waiting for her, Lady Grace after expressing a hope she should meet her friend again, reluctantly took leave, and joined the Earl, who, was impatient to be gone, and who more than usually taciturn, scarcely opened his lips as they were returning to —square, except to desire his daughter would inform her mother he should that day dine at home, as he expected the Marquis of Ormondsty.

On reaching the house, he instantly entered his library, where he continued the remainder of the morning.

Lady Grace immediately repaired to her mother's apartment, whom she had the pleasure of finding looking considerably better than she had done for many days.

After relating her meeting with Sophia at Somerset House, she mentioned the emotion of her friend at the unexpected sight of Lord d'Arcy's picture, and the suspicions it had excited in her own mind. "Tell me my dear mother," she continued, "was I wrong in the conclusion I drew from the circumstance at the moment, that Sophia is implicated in the unhappiness of my brother?"

Lady Montrieul confessed her conjectures had been right; "and from all I hear of your friend," she continued, "I am very apprehensive Arthur can never reconcile himself to the harsh decree of his father."

The Countess then entered into the particulars of her son's application to the Earl for his consent to forming a connexion with Sophia, and the ill success it had met with. "You my love, are not

now to learn these unhappy prejudices of your father respecting rank ; but as you may feel some surprize at his raising objections to your brother's marrying into a family so nobly descended as Mr. De Clairville's from the house of Ormondsty, I must apprise you that the Earl has been by some one informed, the present owner of Melcombe, owes, in a great measure, his fine property, to the speculation of his father, who was in some way connected with a mercantile house abroad."

" Poor Arthur ! there is then little hope for you," said his sister despondingly, and as such is the case I trust you may be prevailed upon by Mr. Russel to prolong your visit till Sophia's ends with Mrs. Singleton."

" At all events I hope your brother will only return hither to prepare for his trip to the Continent," returned Lady Mon-

trieul, "which is now the best plan he can pursue for recovering in any degree, his lost tranquility."

The mother and daughter now separated to change their dress for dinner, at which the Earl and Marquis of Ormondsty being present, the subject which they had before been discussing, could not again be resumed.

CHAP. VII.

Mrs. Singleton, on their return from Somerset House, observing Sophia looked pale, advised her to lie down for an hour, promising to send Margaret in time to assist her in preparing for their visit to Portland Place ; which, by the sudden indisposition of Mrs. Montgomery they had been prevented paying the preceding week.

Sophia readily agreed to follow this advice, and by keeping perfectly quiet

and at the same time endeavouring to banish from her mind the events of the morning, was enabled to gain a little sleep; from which she awoke so much refreshed that when she joined her friend in the drawing-room, a few minutes before the arrival of the carriage, she was congratulated by her on the improvement in her looks.

Major Singleton had been absent the greater part of the morning on military duty, from which he returned too late to accompany his wife and her friend to Portland Place; they therefore departed without him.

On their arrival, they were ushered into the drawing-room where a large party were assembled; amongst them was Lady Singleton, who instantly approaching to shake hands with Sophia, in a low voice told her, she never saw her look

handsomer, and doubted not she would find little difficulty in establishing herself entirely to her satisfaction ; then enquiring where she had been that morning, and whether she had seen any thing of the Montagues, she left her to hold a whispering conversation with the mistress of the house,

Colonel Marsden entering, and immediately joining Sophia, prevented the latter from giving to Mrs. Montgomery the attention she wished. That lady was entertaining her guests with the various attainments her children, one six years old, the other four, had arrived at in so short a time. Miss Emma's books were introduced, and handed about to the company, who were expected by mamma to examine her daughter in some particular branch of science she had made this early proficiency in.

After dinner the children again made

their appearance, and the boy who appeared the greatest pet, a fine little fellow two years his sister's junior, was seated by his father on the table, and permitted to help himself to every thing within his reach. Some ice, near Sophia attracted the attention of the young gentleman, and throwing himself at his length on the table, he endeavoured to reach it, but finding it was not within his grasp, he called vehemently to her to put it nearer him. Sophia looked towards his mother, expecting to hear her prohibit her son's touching what she considered so very improper for him; but to her surprize was requested to help William to his favorite dish. She was however going to comply with this request, when the child enraged at not having been attended to sooner, seizing a glass hurled it at her with all his strength, and had his skill been equally great, Sophia must have been a considerable sufferer from the blow; but happily the glass fell at some

distance from her, and was shivered into a thousand pieces.

Colonel Marsden, who was sitting next Sophia, feeling greatly irritated with the child, but more so with its parents, seized the little urchin by the arm, and carrying him screaming to his father, returned to congratulate his fair neighbour on her narrow escape from the missile weapon.

Mr. Montgomery, finding he could not prevail upon his son to beg Miss De Clairville's pardon, rang for his nurse, with whom he insisted on his retiring, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his wife, and then apologizing to Sophia, for William's delinquency, which she readily accepted, quiet was again restored, except on the brow of Mrs. Montgomery, who scarcely spoke the rest of the day; and had she dared to carry her resentment to

such lengths, would certainly have refused accompanying the party to the Opera.

As the Montgomerys and their guests entered their box, C——— was singing one of her finest songs ; and Sophia astonished at hearing for the first time, the extraordinary powers of this superior vocal performer, scarcely allowed herself to breathe, fearing to lose a note.

Mrs. Singleton would not interrupt the pleasure her friend's expressive countenance told her she was enjoying, whilst attending to strains that had never yet been equalled ; but when the song was ended and C——— had retired, she directed her attention to a party near them, in one of whom she had recognized Lady Montrieul, who had been some time engaged in watching Sophia, but finding herself observed, immediately looked another way.

Lady Grace, on meeting the eye of her friend, nodded to her ; and Lord Ormondsty, who had accompanied the Countess and her daughter to the Opera, left his companions for a few minutes, to shake hands with Sophia, and enquire for his Melcombe friends.

He then asked whether she had seen the Fitzarthurs since their arrival in Town ? On her replying in the negative, he told her, the younger lady was at her old trade, angling for the heart of the Viscount. “ But report says,” he continued, “ Deresford’s heart has been already hooked ; Can you tell me by whom ?

“ Indeed I am perfectly ignorant on the subject,” Sophia returned, blushing at the arch manner of the Marquis.

“ Should you, my fair cousin, by some unforeseen event,” said the marquis smiling,

“ become acquainted with it ; that is to say, with the lady who has captivated our friend ; it would be charity in you to put her on her guard against the machinations of her rival, and I would, through you, earnestly advise her not to take any viands Miss Louisa Fitzarthur offers her ; as they will be but too certainly poisoned.” He then giving Sophia a most significant smile, again shook hands with her, and returned to the box he had quitted.

The next minute Lord Deresford requested permission to enter that of Mrs. Montgomery, and whispering to Charlotte she allowed him to take possession of a chair between herself and friend, to whom he would have devoted all his attention, had Mrs. Singleton permitted it ; but loudly complaining of his ingratitude, after she had incommoded herself to accommodate him ; she insisted on his paying equal at-

tention to them both ; and if for an instant the Viscount forgot himself, she scrupled not, in some way or other to recall his recollection.

Whilst waiting for their carriages in the *crush* room, Lady Grace approached her friend, and mentioned her mother's wish to be introduced to her. Blushing with surprize and delight at such a request being made by the respected, almost idolized mother of Lord d'Arcy, Sophia could not articulate her sense of the honor conferred on her ; and as she heard Lady Montrieul express the regard she felt for her, and that she already possessed a share of that heart, which had hitherto been filled only with her children, she could scarcely prevent the tears that started to her eyes, from flowing down her cheeks.

Lady Montrieul observing her emotion, which she was but too well able to account

for, endeavoured by conversing on indifferent topics, to turn the current of her thoughts ; but when the Marquis returned to say her carriage waited for her, she again tenderly pressed the hand of Sophia ; and in a low voice entreating her to pity, rather than condemn the Earl, she took the disengaged arm of her daughter's conductor and departed, leaving Sophia more bitterly than ever to lament the barrier that had been raised by prejudice, and which now prevented all hope of her ever knowing more of this amiable woman, who it was impossible to be any time with, without feeling for her the warmest sentiments both of respect and love.

Mrs. Singleton had been engaged in conversation with some of the fashionable friends, at the time Sophia was conversing with Lady Montrieul ; on rejoining her, she observed her listlessly attending to the re-

marks Lord Deresford and Colonel Marsden were making on the company present. To rouse her friend a little from her abstraction, Charlotte directed her observation to Mr. Leigh, who with an opera hat under his arm, larger than himself, was sauntering about the room, holding by the arm a dissipated young nobleman, who finding him very useful as a banker, endured him merely on that account.

Mr. Leigh had several times met Sophia in company since the evening Mrs. Singleton received company, without appearing to recollect her ; but having this evening remarked the attention shown her by Lady Montrieul and her daughter, he again bowed in his usual devoted manner. Sophia however, not feeling sufficiently in spirits to be amused with his absurdities, returned his salutation with a distant curtsey, for which she was lectured by her friend, who told her the little man would

certainly attribute her coolness to pique at his having overlooked her at other times; but Sophia was indifferent about this, or what he thought of her, so that he kept aloof.

Mrs. Montgomery taking a very cool leave of Sophia, had retired sometime with Lady Singleton, when Charlotte having observed the cloud that still lowered on the brow of the mother, assured her friend the only way to make her peace there, was, the next time she called in Portland Place to fill her redicule with cakes and sweetmeats for master pet: but Sophia assured her if she had no better plan to propose, she feared she must rest satisfied with continuing in disgrace; as her conscience would not allow her to injure the child, in order to re-establish herself in the favor of his mother.

Lord Deresford, and Colonel Marsden,

who accompanied the Singletons and their friend to Seymore street, remained there till a late hour, and as soon as they left the house, Sophia gladly availed herself of the opportunity to retire for the night.

CHAP. VIII.



The next morning as Sophia was dressing, Margaret delivered her a letter which had arrived by the post. On opening it, she found it was from her sister Harriet, who after expressing the pleasure her last account of herself had given them all, thus continued, “ Edward’s spirits are not the
“ least amended since I wrote, and I now
“ begin to entertain very serious apprehensions, the uneasiness of his mind, is
“ fast undermining his health. He looks
“ thin and pale, and scarcely eats any thing,

“ That Charles Warburton has his suspi-
“ cions, Ellen and I are both aware of ; but
“ to where or whom they point, we are not
“ able to discover. Ellen at my request
“ questioned him yesterday on the subject,
“ but in vain ; as he pretends to be equally
“ at a loss with us, to account for the sad
“ alteration that has taken place in his
“ friend. More than once lately I hoped
“ the latter was going to confide in me : but
“ when I flatter myself he is on the point
“ of throwing off this cruel reserve, and is
“ about to disclose the cause of his evident
“ wretchedness, some sudden recollection
“ appears to come across him, (perhaps he
“ is bound to secrecy,) as abruptly rising
“ he hurries from the room.

“ All hopes of ever seeing him the hus-
“ band of our dear Emily, have entirely
“ vanished ; if by any chance, her name is
“ mentioned before him, he turns pale and
“ endeavours to change the conversation.

“ You, as well as myself, my dear Sophia,
“ remember the time when she was all and
“ every thing to him ; and when with Dry-
“ den’s heroine she might have said,

“ He prefer’d me

“ Above the maidens of my age, and rank,
“ Still shunn’d their company, and still sought mine,
“ I, was not won with gifts, yet still he gave,
“ And all his gifts, tho’ small, yet spoke of love.
“ He pick’d the earliest strawberries in the woods,
“ The cluster’d filberts, and the purple grapes ;
“ He taught a prating stare to speak my name,
“ And when he found a nest of nightengales,
“ Or callow linnet, he would shew ’em me,
“ And let me take them out.”

“ I make no apology to you for this
“ quotation, the play from which it was
“ taken I never read, but Alfred had taken
“ it up one morning as we were sitting in
“ the library, and amused me exceedingly
“ with reciting several passages from it;

“ amongst them was the forgoing, which
“ instantly struck me as descriptive of that
“ time when we were with those two be-
“ loved beings at Woodley, when Edward,
“ by similar attentions to Emily, sometimes
“ occasioned us a sensation resembling
“ jealousy. I begged Alfred to copy the
“ lines for me, that I might send them to
“ you ; and now my dear sister I have but
“ little more to say.”

“ I find our sister does not return to
“ London as she once intended, but pre-
“ fers being confined at Glenmore. We
“ have promised to visit her in the course
“ of the summer, as Charles cannot conve-
“ niently leave home, and we must not ex-
“ pect to see Matilda without her husband.
“ Alfred leaves us next week ; you will see
“ him in Seymour street. How much I
“ wish Charlotte would be prevailed upon,
“ to allow of your returning with him to
“ Melcombe. Mamma says we must not

“ propose such a thing to her, but indeed
“ my dear Sophia, both Ellen and I begin
“ to think the time very long since you left
“ us.”

Sophia had scarcely finished reading her letter, when Mrs. Singleton requested admittance, who perceiving what she was engaged with, said, “ I find you, as well as myself, have had letters this morning; here is one from Eliza, lamenting most piteously her seclusion at Ashmore, whilst her younger sister is enjoying all the gaieties of a Town life. She entreats me to have some compassion on her, and write even more pressingly than I have yet done to her mother, to spare her to me, for a few weeks; and ends her epistle with the information that Colonel Howard leaves Melcombe in a few days, and will have great pleasure in taking the charge of her hither.”

“ Mortimer,” continued Mrs. Singleton,

“ is very anxious my sister should seize so excellent an opportunity, as the Colonel’s return to Town affords, of coming to us : as it is his opinion, a further knowledge of the world, will do more in curing her of that affection my poor mother so deplores, than all the lectures that have been read to her on the subject. I shall therefore once more try my rhetoric with the latter, to induce her to consent parting with Eliza. Is there any thing I can say for you my dear Sophia in my letter ? which I shall despatch by the return of post.”

Sophia thanking her friend, declined her offer, as it was her intention to write that day to Melcombe. Mrs. Singleton next informed her of her husband’s having heard from his father, who had given them hopes of seeing him soon. “ I expect Sophia you will receive my good Papa with one of your sweetest smiles: he has desired us to secure lodgings for him in the vicinity of

Seymour street," she continued, "but this you will believe neither Mortimer nor myself can or will agree to; as no other roof than this, must shelter our respected parent whilst he remains in Town."

Sophia expressed the pleasure, the appearance of Mr. Singleton amongst them would give her, but Charlotte interrupting her said smiling, "It pains me to withdraw your thoughts from your old lover, to fix it upon a new one, but I must not forget to mention a note I found from Miss Deresford after you retired last night. It came when we were out, and Clements had allowed it to escape his memory, till that minute. To keep you no longer in suspense, I will hasten to impart its contents, which was a pressing invitation for us to spend Friday *en ceremonie* in—street, and an inducement for our complying with her request, Miss Deresford adds, Lady Grace Montreuil, has promised to meet us there. Have

you any objection to accepting this invitation ? ”

“ I certainly can have no other than—

“ Than what ? the fear of Lord Deresford’s not spending the day at home ? Oh ! how I wish he could see that indignant blush, he would certainly interpret it in his favor ; as it is indifference alone, he has to dread, and that I perceive but little symptoms of at this moment.”

“ How can you my dear Charlotte, thus delight in the act of tormenting,” returned Sophia unable to resist laughing.

“ Shall I return an answer to this note, in the negative, or affirmative ? ” enquired Charlotte. “ Come dear girl,” she continued, “ consent to accompany me to our friends in—street, on the day appointed ; and I will give you my word, to be very

good, and not even appear to observe the direction of the Viscount's eyes, or to hear his sighs, should they pierce my ears even more deeply than they did last night; when I sympathized so much with him, on the oppression he seemed labouring under from his chest, that I seriously began to feel my own breath affected."

Sophia was at length prevailed upon to give her consent to this invitation being accepted; and Charlotte after thanking her for the *cheerful* manner it had been given in, proposed descending to the breakfast-room, where she said she had left her husband lounging on the sofa, surrounded with newspapers and letters, and who would not be sorry to see them, as he had been professing himself nearly famished.

The Major rose from his recumbent posture as his wife, and her friend entered; and after paying his usual morning salu-

tations to the latter, offered to resign his seat to her.

“ When my dear Mortimer,” cried Mrs. Singleton, “ am I to compliment you, upon having attained that fashionable inattention, practised at present, by all our *tonish* young men ? ”

“ I am afraid my dear Charlotte,” he returned smiling, “ you will too often have occasion to blush for your husband, if he can only obtain your approbation, by imitating his brethren of the savage race, in their treatment of your sex.”

“ You do not I hope include our friends Marsden and Monthermer, or Sophia’s admirer, Lord Deresford, in your animadversions on the manners of the young men of the present day ? ” said his wife.

“ You may be certain I do not ; as the

gentlemen you name, are in every respect the reverse of the race I was alluding to."

Major Singleton, was prevented saying more by the entrance of his aunt, whose more than usual length of countenance, indicated something had gone wrong; which she did not keep them long ignorant of, as approaching the major she said, "It grieves me my dear nephew, to be the messenger of ill tidings, but I have just learnt the number of your last lottery ticket, has been drawn a blank."

"Is that all?" cried Charlotte; from your ladyships manner, I apprehended something much worse."

"And do you not Mrs. Singleton, consider the loss of four or five and twenty pounds, as bad news, which might have produced as many thousands, had not this unlucky number been fixed upon?"

"I confess," returned her niece smiling,

“ I should have had no objection to find myself possessed of a few extra bank notes: but Mortimer will I know, bear his loss with fortitude, as he never expected to see his money again, much less did he look for a prize.”

“ Your words Mrs. Singleton imply that your husband considered his money thrown away, and by my instigation: be at least happy in the knowledge, that I have been an equal sufferer with him, and have also paid for my folly.”

“ Our loss, my dear Aunt,” said the Major, “ will answer one good end at least, if it makes us more careful of our money for the future, which might have been put out to so much better interest.”

“ I do not perfectly comprehend what you mean, nephew, by better *interest*,” returned Lady Singleton, looking much dis-

pleased ; “ what would so trifling a sum, as that you have lost, bring in at the ten per cents ? ”

Charlotte, scarcely able to refrain from laughing, at hearing that called *trifling*, which the minute before Lady Singleton had reproved her for having denominated such, now said, “ I believe my dear madam, Mortimer was not alluding to those *cents*, you are thinking of, but to those of far greater importance ; ” she was going to add, had not a look from her husband prevented her finishing her speech. Major Singleton perceived his aunt was beginning to feel seriously displeased with them both ; and unwilling she should quit the house in her present irascible mood, he endeavoured to divert her attention to other subjects ; and for this purpose enquired whether she had seen Mrs. Montgomery that morning, and whether she still harboured resentment against

Sophia, for having been the occasion of her son's disgrace the day before ?

Lady Singleton in warmly espousing the case of her friend, forgot the lottery tickets, and after exculpating Mrs. Montgomery from feeling any sentiment resembling resentment towards Miss De Clairville, confessed she was a little hurt with her, as had the latter indulged the child, by immediately complying with his request, he would never have thought of hurting her, and might have been allowed to remain below till the females returned to the drawing-room.

“ I had hoped,” returned Major Singleton, “ Mrs. Montgomery, would from what passed yesterday, have been led to reflect on the evil consequences likely to ensue, from the ungoverned passions of her son, and tremble for the result, unless an early check is given to them.”

“ My dear nephew,” cried Lady Singleton with an expressive shrug, “ you forget the boy is scarcely four years and a half old; if he had been sixteen, you could not have feared more from him.”

“ Oh ! my dear madam,” returned the major, “ we should not so often trace in those around us, that carelessness of hurting the feelings of others, that total deadness to all right principle, would parents live to train them in the way they should go, and carefully destroy the weeds which if allowed to remain, will in time entirely choke the seed of happiness and virtue.

“ This is I dare say very fine reasoning, my good sir, but all you or I could say on the subject to my friend, would have little effect, unless it had that of making her more indulgent to her children ; and in truth, I could not blame her, if it had this consequence ; as I should have been very angry,

had any one presumed to lecture me upon my treatment of Henry, when a boy."

"Happily for him," thought the major, "he was in no danger of being ruined by indulgence ; which may in some measure account for his being at present what he is ; respected by all who know him."

Lady Singleton, soon after rose to depart; but first turning to Sophia, said, you are to be at the Marchioness of D—s ball, "I find Miss De Clairville: it is to be the most splendid thing that has been given this winter, and let me tell you, you are in great luck to be in Town at that time."

Sophia answered this speech with a slight bow ; her spirits were not just then tuned to mirth and revelry; she began to sigh for Melcombe and its tranquil pleasures, and could she have done so, without hurting her friend, would have left London and all its

attractions, Lady D—s ball included, with a sigh of regret.

The Miss Deresfords called in the course of the morning, with many other ladies of Mrs. Singleton's acquaintances, and in the evening Sophia accompanied her friend to a large assembly ; where she again met Lord Deresford, whose pointed attentions to her were remarked by all.

The following day, was passed in—street ; and had the master of the house been absent, Sophia would have enjoyed her visit exceedingly. Lady Grace, dined there, and Lord Ormondsty looked in upon them in the evening, and by his good humoured rattling, much enlivened the party. Sophia observed with pleasure, his attentions were not unwillingly received by Lady Grace ; and she looked forward to the time, when as the wife of the marquis, she would again visit Melcombe.

After tea, the Miss Deresfords proposed a little music, and Lady Grace as usual, delighted all present with the elegance and correctness of her performance. Sophia feeling much soothed whilst listening to a beautiful and simple Tyrolesian air, entreated her friend to repeat it, but Lord Deresford not approving her attention should be devoted to any thing but himself, declared he could not remain in the room, if his cousin continued that melancholy strain any longer; the marquis also begging to hear something more lively, Lady Grace instantly changed the measure to that, “of a noble race was Shenkin,” when Major Singleton and Colonel Marsden making their appearance, the light hearted Ormondsty called for a dance, and Sophia rather than run any risk of a tête-a-tête with the Viscount, allowed him to claim her for his partner, and to lead her to the little set then forming for country dances, which Mrs. Singleton, and the

Miss Deresfords alternately played for them.

At length, to the relief of Sophia, the carriage was announced, and more than ever annoyed by the presevering attentions of Lord Deresford, who seemed not to observe the coolness with which they were received, she felt comparative happiness in finding herself at quiet in her own apartment, where Margaret was waiting for her.

CHAP. IX.



Another fortnight passed in the usual routine of Balls, Operas, Assemblies, et-cetera, and Sophia began seriously to think of returning home.

Mr. Singleton, and Miss Warburton, had arrived at the time they were expected; and Colonel Haward, who accompanied the latter to Town, was concerned at finding Sophia looking so much thinner and paler than when she left Melcombe, but attributing her loss of colour entirely to late

hours, he strongly recommended her to be more careful of herself, and to return with him into —shire, when the business he came about was finished.

Sophia would not allow that she felt ill, but confessed she began to tire of a London life ; and finding he would be ready in a few days to leave Town, she determined upon accompanying him to Melcombe, and at length, with some difficulty prevailed upon her friend Charlotte to give her consent to the plan.

Sophia often met Lady Grace in company, and sometimes the Earl, who at those times forgetful of his character of the highly polished nobleman, would embarrass her exceedingly, by fixing his large and penetrating eyes upon her, for several minutes together. Once, as she was passing a table at which he was playing, the trimming at

the bottom of her dress, caught on one of Colonel Marsden's spurs, who engaged in observing the game, was not aware of her being so near, and whilst stopping to disengage it, Lord Montreuil's attention was wholly engrossed by her, that forgetting what he was about, he played a wrong card: Sophia, turning to thank the Colonel for his assistance, met the eye of the Earl, and unable to interpret the expression of it, her own sank under his piercing ones, at the moment Lord Montreuil's antagonist, finding his Lordship had revoked, informed him of it, when the Earl without speaking, paid the accustomed forfeit, and rising as soon as the game was finished, he professed himself unequal to undertaking another, and the rest of the time he remained there, devoted himself to watching every movement of Sophia.

Mrs. Howard had been applied to by a friend, to recommend a governess for her

daughters, who were beginning to require more of her attention, than it was possible for her to devote to them. Sophia's young friend appearing every thing that could be wished as a preceptress, was mentioned, and Mrs. Howard was entreated by Lady Berwick, to engage her immediately.

Sophia, the morning after she had received an answer from her sister, hastened with it to Mrs. Willoughby's, and finding that Lady from home, gave her an opportunity of delivering it into Annie's hands ; who read it with delight. She had once more ventured to hint her wishes to her aunt, of being permitted to seek an independency ; and had not as formerly found her averse to the plan. Mrs. Willoughby after a little hesitation said, she might please herself ; and in a few weeks from that time, this amiable and interesting young woman was happily settled in a family, who soon learning to value her as she

deserved, made it their study to render her abode with them pleasant.

Miss Warburton now often wondered how it had been possible for her to have existed out of London, and was not sorry that Sophia was soon to return to Melcombe, as Colonel Marsden and Mr. Monthermer certainly preferred her society to that of the fair Eliza, whose affected airs Mr. Monthermer seized every opportunity of turning into ridicule. Mrs. Singleton felt sometimes inclined to be very angry with him for it, yet could not help acknowledging to Sophia, it was scarcely possible to refrain from smiling at the various attitudes her sister threw herself into, in the course of the day.

Mr. Singleton and Sophia were become greater friends than ever; he often expressed his wish he had another son to offer to her acceptance, that it might have been his

boast he had two of the most charming women for his daughters that were to be found throughout the kingdom. When observing her endeavouring to shun the attentions of Lord Deresford, he would say, " I am not surprised at it; such a man might suit Eliza, but can never be the choice of a Sophia De Clairville. He goes not the way to win her affections: I thought, Charlotte, when I met them together at Ashmore, I never saw a pair better matched than Lord d'Arcy and your friend ; tell me what is become of his Lordship ? "

Charlotte answered, she believed he was visiting at that time a friend near Town ; she then mentioned her suspicions of an attachment between Lord d'Arcy and Sophia, which she feared was a hapless one, having learned from good authority Lord Montreuil had entered into engagements for ~~his~~ son, with a daughter of the Longuiille family, which it was not probable

the Earl would be induced to cancel in favor of a woman who had not the same rank to boast of. "Indeed," she added, "I am very angry with Lord d'Arcy, who I have every reason to believe was aware of his being engaged to Lady Lucretia, at the time he was paying Sophia such marked attention at Ashmore.

"I cannot believe him the villain you represent," returned Mr. Singleton; "and think it most probable the Earl kept this projected alliance from his son."

Mrs. Singleton smiling at her father's warmth, assured him she had been as little disposed as himself, to think unfavorably of his favorite, till she heard from Colonel Marsden, his Lordship's intended trip to Paris was delayed, that he might carry Lady Lucretia with him.

"Tut, tut, tut," cried Mr. Singleton,

angry with his daughter for endeavoring to convince him she had reason to believe the truth of her assertions, "let me tell you Charlotte it is not possible for that man, who has once loved Sophia De Clairville, to marry any other woman."

"Perhaps then my dear father," said Mrs. Singleton, "you will not allow it possible for my friend to attend to any other man on the subject of love, after being attached to Lord d'Arcy.

"I think I may venture to say," he returned, "it is impossible she should to Lord Deresford. Tell me not Charlotte of his being a worthy, sensible, discreet young fellow, and I know not what besides; his attentions are not merely obtrusive, they are indelicate, and I know Sophia thinks with me, or she would not shrink as she does, from receiving them: I wish with all

my heart the man would speak out, and give her an opportunity of sending him at once about his business. I cannot conceive why he does not."

Sophia's voice was at this moment heard speaking to Major Singleton in a more cheerful tone, than they had of late been accustomed to hear it : the next minute she entered the room, with her companion. " My dear Charlotte," she cried, " your husband has been persuading me not to run, but to ride away with him this morning, and I was on the point of giving my consent, when I recollected my engagement to walk with you and Eliza in Kensington gardens."

Mrs. Singleton, believing a ride would be more beneficial to her friend than merely a lounge, said she should be very glad of an excuse to remain at home, as it was probable they should be kept up till a late

hour that evening, which was the night of the Marchioness of D—'s grand ball.

“ But what will Eliza say to me?” said Sophia.

“ Oh ! never mind her,” returned Mrs. Singleton; “ I shall, I make no doubt, find some way of amusing her in your absence; so let me not hear another word on the subject.”

Mr. Singleton said he would order his horse and ride with them; and Sophia finding her friend wished her to accept the Major's invitation, hastened to equip herself, and escorted by the two gentlemen rode from the house. She had several times since she had been in Town, accompanied Major Singleton in his morning rides: this day he proposed taking her to Richmond, and at the same time avail himself of the opportunity to pay a visit to an

old friend who resided in a beautiful Villa on the bank of the Thames. Mr. Singleton expressed some apprehension, the ride would be too far for their fair companion, who would most probably dance the greater part of the night : but Sophia assured him she was too much accustomed to the former exercise to fear feeling fatigued from it ; and rather than be disappointed of visiting a spot she had so often wished to see, she would with pleasure resign the ball and all its attractions.

It was a delightful morning in the latter end of May. Sophia's spirits felt much exhilarated from breathing the pure air of the country, after inhaling the smoaky atmosphere of London ; and she was conversing with her companions in a cheerful strain, when her horse of a sudden began to kick and plunge in a furious manner. The major greatly alarmed, instantly dismounted, and giving his own horse to the

groom, seized the bridle of Sophia's, whilst Mr. Singleton assisted her in alighting, which she had scarcely done, when the animal mad with pain from the sting of a large fly, broke from the major, and turning round, galloped back to Town. Happily, by a timely retreat, the party escaped coming in contract with the feet of the terrified animal, and the major, fearful his wife might hear of the return of the horse, without his rider, desired the servant to ride back with all speed, and inform his mistress of Miss De Clairville's safety, and also to send the carriage to convey the latter home, as she would not consent to her mounting again the horse that had behaved so ill. He then proposed riding forward himself to Richmond to reconnoitre the premises of his friend, that should he be from home he might seek shelter for his fair charge beneath another hospitable roof. Mr. Singleton approved his son's intention, and taking the bridle of his horse on one arm,

and offering his other to Sophia, they slowly followed. At the entrance of the Village they perceived Major Singleton returning on foot, accompanied by two gentlemen; in one of whom, Sophia, scarcely crediting her senses, recognized Lord d'Arcy; who equally agitated as herself at this unexpected meeting, could with difficulty command himself to address her with any tolerable degree of composure.

The major observing Sophia looked paler than usual, was fearful her alarm had been greater than she had confessed: but Mr. Singleton, aware of the cause of her altered complexion, and believing she would feel relief from moving forwards, said, "I am not sorry Mortimer to find you have succeeded at once in your search of a resting place for my young friend, who is not the heroine she would have persuaded us she was, and I suspect will be very happy to find herself within your friend's Villa."

Mr. Russel was now introduced to Sophia, by the Major, who expressing his hopes she would honor a bachelor's house with taking some refreshment in it. led the way to an elegant little Box, where the sister of its owner was ready to receive her.

Miss Russel attributing the pallid countenance of her young guest to fatigue, insisted upon her leaving the gentlemen for a short time, and sitting quietly with her in her dressing room. Sophia, grateful for such kind consideration, followed her kind hostess up stairs, who in the course of conversation, finding the former had never been at Richmond till this morning, offered to accompany her in a little round, when she felt herself sufficiently rested.

Not many yards from the house, Miss Russel and her companion encountered the gentlemen, who being made acquainted with their intention, entreated permission to join them in their ramble.

Mr. Singleton offered his arm to Miss Russel, as her brother did his to Sophia ; and Lord d'Arcy with the Major followed in the rear. Sophia vainly endeavoured to assume sufficient courage to raise her eyes, when she was occasionally addressed by the former : she had remarked the trepidation of his voice on their first meeting that morning, as he enquired after her family ; which had not the effect of quieting her own nerves.

On reaching a spot more elevated than the rest, Miss Russel desired the party to remain stationary a few minutes ; and pointing to a seat, which had been erected under the spreading branches of a fine Plane tree, she proposed to Sophia taking possession of it, as she might have an opportunity of resting herself, and at the same time take a survey of the adjacent country. The latter readily consented, and had her mind felt more at ease, she must have been

delighted with the prospect that presented itself at the moment to her eye.

Lord d'Arcy had taken his station near her, and was endeavouring to draw her into something resembling conversation, when Major Singleton suddenly turning to him said, "I have forgot to enquire d'Arcy where you have been concealed the last two months ; rumour has been very busy with your name, during this time. It has said you were turned hermit, that you were going abroad, and lastly, that you were soon to take a wife ; nay, that you were only waiting to be noosed, before you paid the court of Louis the 18th. a visit. Which of these reports am I to believe ?"

"I begin indeed strongly to suspect," said Mr. Russel, "my friend d'Arcy is on the point of commencing Benedict."

"But where are we to look for his Lord-

ship's Beatrice?" enquired Mr, Singleton, "scarcely able to refrain from glancing towards Sophia."

"I believe, my dear sir, it would be a difficult matter to find her," returned Lord d'Arcy: "at least, I profess myself entirely ignorant of the place of her abode."

"You would seriously endeavour to persuade us," said Major Singleton, "you know not in which part of the United kingdoms, Longuiville house is situated."

"I do must solemnly assure you," Lord d'Arcy answered, "*my Beatrice*, if she is in existence, will not be found in that mansion."

"You really, and bona fide, declare," said Miss Russel, who had been much entertained at this catechising, "that you are not my Lord, as has been represented to

us, on the point of marriage with Lady Lucretia Selburne ?”

“ I do indeed.”

“ Then with her sister perhaps ?”

“ Nor yet with Lady Caroline ; and if such reports are in circulation, you will do me a favor in contradicting them.”

“ Excuse *my* doing this,” cried Major Singleton laughing ; “ I dare not indeed enter the lists against such an army of the fair sex, who would demolish me at once, were I to assert as false, what they are determined should be true. But,” he continued, “ if you my dear d’Arcy are in earnest an excellent opportunity presents itself this very evening for your putting an end to this rumour : The Marchiones of D— gives a grand ball ; return with us to Town,

and accompany my wife and Miss De Clairville to it."

Lord d'Arcy appeared to hesitate a moment; but upon the major continuing to urge his request, he at length agreed to be of the party in the evening, and accompany the latter to Seymour Street.

Sophia could with difficulty conceal the interest she felt in the preceding conversation; and when she heard Lord d'Arcy consent to return with them to Town, and accompany them to the Marchioness in the evening, she scarcely knew whether to feel joy or sorrow on the occasion; the first she feared was the predominant sensation. She was not however allowed much time for taking herself to task for this, as Miss Russel enquiring if she felt herself sufficiently rested to return, on her answering in the affirmative, the party retraced their steps to the house.

The carriage had arrived during their ramble, and in less than a quarter of an hour after, was ordered to the door. Major Singleton offered Lord d'Arcy his choice on the barouche box, or with his father and Miss De Clairville within the vehicle; he preferred the latter, and before they reached Town, Mr. Singleton saw enough to convince him, the hearts of his young companions, were in the possession of each other, but that there was an impediment to their happiness he also perceived, from the fits of abstraction that occasionally came across them: which made it necessary for him several times to repeat his questions, before he could obtain an answer from either.

Mrs. Singleton was much surprised on finding who had made the third in the barouche, and might have been induced to hope it augured well, had she not observed in Sophia's countenance a more than usual

depression, and as she left the room to retire to her own, her eyes were filled with tears.

More angry than ever with him, who she believed had caused them to flow, Charlotte could with difficulty prevail upon herself to be tolerably civil to Lord d'Arcy ; and the first minute she found herself alone with her husband, she took him seriously to task, for having persuaded his friend to return with him to Town.

This was the first moment, his wife had imparted to him the suspicions she herself entertained of this unfortunate attachment; but on hearing the proofs she now brought forward to substantiate them, Major Singleton was convinced of the justness of them; and felt so hurt with himself for having, though undesignedly, given pain to Sophia, Charlotte found some difficulty in reconciling him.

CHAP. X.



Mrs. Singleton after finishing her own toilet, hastened to her friend, and dismissing Margaret, assisted her young lady in completing hers ; when observing Sophia's dress was more than usually elegant, she archly enquired for whom such pains were taken, Sophia with a crimsoned cheek assured her, for no one particularly ! adding " the dress you now see me in, was ordered several days since for this evening."

" Believe me I did not suspect it had

been ordered, since you returned from Richmond," returned Charlotte with as much gravity as she could assume: "But when, or for what purpose it was selected, your taste was never more conspicuous, as nothing can be better calculated for setting off your figure to advantage; in short, there is only one thing wanting to complete your appearance."

Sophia laughing, entreated to learn what it was.

"The Viscountess Deresford's jewels: when, my dear Sophia, am I to see you adorned with them?"

"Never I hope."

"Never! Am I to believe you serious? You do not then I presume intend fulfilling your engagement with his Lordship this evening?"

“ If I dance at all, it will be with Lord Deresford, but I feel so much fatigued with my morning’s excursion, I scarcely think I shall attempt it.”

“ You prefer then a tête-à-tête with the Viscount to the honor of dancing with him ; Ah ! Sophia, this does not look like discouragement.”

“ Charlotte ! ” cried Sophia reproachfully, “ when will you leave off your happy art of tormenting ? ”

“ When you, like myself are transformed into a steady matron : so I would advise you to take upon yourself the title of wife, as soon as possible ; or else make up your mind to endure with all due resignation my art of tormenting, as you term it ; and now permit me to fasten your bracelet which I perceive your shaking hand prevents your

doing for yourself. There, now take one more glance at the figure presented in that mirror, and confess you never saw a more attractive object."

"I acknowledge I never did," returned Sophia, as sportively drawing her friend towards it, and retreating at the same moment herself, the figure of Charlotte was alone reflected in the glass.

"Do not think to escape unpunished," cried the latter, "for the trick you have played, in substituting my diminutive little figure in the mirror, for your noble one, and by so doing, making me remark more than ever the advantage you have in this respect over your friend. By my art of tormenting," continued Mrs. Singleton, "I here declare, this night shall see me revenged upon Sophia De Clairville; who shall find to her cost Charlotte Singleton says not more, then she can, and will perform."

Sophia laughing at her threats, accompanied her friend to the apartment of Miss Warburton ; whom to their surprize, they found already dressed, and in a style of simple elegance, she had never till then adopted.

Mrs. Singleton felt very curious to learn what had occasioned this great and striking metamorphosis in her sister ; and observing in old Martha's countenance something that implied her knowledge of it, she made an excuse for remaining in the room after Eliza and Sophia had quitted it.

Martha had lived many years in the family, and had waited upon Miss Warburton from her birth ; Charlotte felt a warm regard for her sister's nurse who now acted the part of *femme de chambre* to Eliza.

“ My dear Martha,” began Mrs. Sin-

gleton, “ I never saw my sister so becomingly dressed as she is to day ; she really looks quite pretty.”

“ Bless her sweet face,” returned her nurse, “ to my thinking she does so at all times : but as you say, my dear madam, Miss Warburton looks even better than usual, and if I thought you would not betray me, I would tell you the reason why she does so.

Charlotte promised secrecy, and Martha thus continued. “ I think it was the night after you had all been to some grand ball, about a week or ten days since, when we heard Miss De Clairville had turned the heads of so many gentlemen, that Colonel Marsden’s gentleman mentioned in the housekeeper’s room he had heard his master tell Mr Monthermur, there was not her match for loveliness in the whole world; for that Miss De Clairville always appeared

dressed so simple, and so proper, so different to the fantastical way many young ladies dressed themselves, that this alone would recommend her to a man of sense. I mentioned, what I heard Mr. Philip say, to my young lady, who never made any answer at the time, and I sadly feared she was angry with me for telling her what I had picked up. But when I saw the beautiful plain white satin dress arrive this morning, I could hardly keep from calling out, I was so surprized. I made however no remarks till I saw Miss Eliza finished, and then could not for the life of me help telling her I never saw her look so well before."

Mrs. Singleton was much diverted at finding the alteration in her sister's style of dress was to be traced to Colonel Marsden: and again promising Martha to keep her secret, she repaired to the drawing-room where the whole party were assembled.

Lord d'Arcy was apparently engaged with a book, but Charlotte observed his eye too frequently wandered from his page to rest on her friend, for him to be much interested in its contents. Colonel Marsden was describing to Sophia, his sensations upon first seeing the sun rise from mount Etna, when he was in Sicily, but she appeared as little interested in the noble Colonel's feeling, as Lord d'Arcy was with the volume in his hand. Eliza however made up for her deficiency in this respect, and enquired particularly after the manners and customs of the inhabitants of those regions. Her affected airs and graces were entirely laid aside; which Mr. Monthermur observing, enquired of Sophia as they were descending to the dining-room, whether Miss Warburton had sent them to Ashmore to be polished afresh.

On returning to the drawing room, Sophia was requested by the Major to give

them a little music, but she begged that evening to be excused complying with his request. The song she had been singing the morning Lord d'Arcy interrupted her recurred to her recollection, and a sigh involuntarily escaped her. Fearful it was overheard by him, from whom she much wished to keep her feelings, she hastily rose on the pretence of seeking her fan at the other end of the apartment, and was instantly followed by Lord d'Arcy, who, as he was assisting her in her search, said in a low voice, "will not Miss De Clairville allow an old friend to claim her for his partner some part of this evening?"

"Are you quite right in making this request?" she hesitatingly returned.

"Unless you think me too presumptuous."

"You must be aware," she returned,

“that was not my meaning.” Then observing the eyes of Mrs. Singleton were directed towards them, she hastily added, “you will find me disengaged after the first set,” as she endeavoured to pass him to return to her seat; but stopping her, he said, “And may I not be made acquainted with the name of the happy man to whom you are engaged that set?”

Sophia coloured, as she answered, “Lord Deresford.”

“Lord Deresford!” he repeated; “then the report which has reached me is true; and he has superseded me in Sophia’s affections. Fool that I was to be prevailed upon to return to London, only to be witness of my rival’s happiness.”

Alarmed at the vehemence of his manner, and apprehensive it might be observed by others, Sophia would have endeavoured

to soothe Lord d'Arcy, could she have done so without betraying to him the little reason he had to fear a rival in his cousin, or in any other man; as this therefore was impossible, she assumed a tone and gesture little accordant to what was passing within her bosom, as she hastily enquired what he could mean by thus giving way to the impetuosity of his feelings before her.

“ I ought indeed,” he replied, “ to entreat your forgiveness, for having allowed them to overcome me as they have done; pardon me then this once, my dear Miss De Clairville, and I trust you will never have to complain of me again.”

Sophia felt the tears rush to her eyes as she held out her hand to him, assuring him the offence was no longer remembered by her: Lord d'Arcy seizing it, raised it to his lips. “ You will then perhaps dance with

me," he cried with a melancholy smile, "some part of the evening?" She had only time to answer him in the affirmative, as the carriage was announced, to which she was led by his Lordship, in a frame of mind little in unison with the scene of gaiety she was about to enter.

On entering the ball-room at the marchioness of D—'s, Sophia found Lord Deresford impatiently awaiting her, when scarcely noticing the rest of her party, he instantly seized her hand, and led her to join the dancers.

Involuntarily she turned to look at Lord d'Arcy, and with concern remarked his heightened colour, and the air almost of defiance, with which he regarded his cousin.

Lord Deresford found her less inclined than ever to receive his attentions, and

noticing her abstracted air, apprehensive she felt unwell, he entreated her not to attempt dancing, but allow him to lead her to a seat. Sophia ashamed that her absent fit had been remarked by her partner, declined sitting down, and endeavouring to assume a more disengaged manner, tried to converse with her accustomed ease.

At the conclusion of the first dance, the Viscount left her to seek some refreshment, and in his way encountered the younger daughter of the Marquis of Longuiville, who nodding to him said, " You my Lord will I hope acknowledge me, though your cousin appears not inclined to confer that honor upon me ; Indeed any one would suppose, to observe the awful distance he keeps, it was Lucretia, instead of my little insignificant self, who was present, but," she continued, " there is another reason for my being anxious to be attended to by you, which is that I may become acquaint-

ed with the name of that lovely girl, with whom Lord d'Arcy entered the room."

"I am extremely sorry it is totally out of my power to gratify your Ladyship in this particular," returned Lord Deresford; for till you mentioned it, I was not aware of d'Arcy's making one of this company.

"Methinks it is rather strange, my Lord, you should be ignorant of the name of your fair partner," said Lady Caroline, looking a little incredulous. "Your ladyship is under some mistake, if you suppose my cousin was of Miss De Clairville's party," returned Lord Deresford.

"If that is the name that designates your fair partner," said her ladyship, "I am no longer at a loss to account for the flushed cheeks of your cousin, when you stepped forth, and bore his Helen from him."

“Your ladyship is somewhat enigmatical,” said Lord Deresford, beginning to feel disconcerted at the supposition she had formed of Lord d’Arcy’s attachment to Sophia.

“Am I?” she returned laughing, “never mind my being so; you will long before this evening terminates have many an opportunity afforded you to solve my enigma; in the interim, introduce me I enreat to your and Lord d’Arcy’s fair friend.”

“Had not your ladyship better apply to my cousin for his interest for this purpose; as, if I comprehend your meaning, you believe him to be the happy man.”

Lord Deresford had never flattered himself with having created that interest in the bosom of Sophia, he so much desired; yet he continued to hope that she might in time be softened by his constant assiduities.

He had seen her in company with men of his own and superior rank, many of whom had paid her the most marked attentions; but instead of being elated with such distinction, she had without particularly shunning it, always appeared relieved in escaping from them. But Lord Deresford now saw reason to apprehend, her indifference had arisen from an attachment to his cousin; and feeling unequal to bear the raillery of Lady Caroline at this moment, who professed to find great entertainment from annoying all love stricken youths, he endeavoured to make good his retreat; but preventing this, she said, "and so you refuse my petition, for an introduction to Miss De Clairville? Poor Deresford!" she continued in an affected tone of commiseration; "and have I alarmed your fears, in finding in this fascinating cousin, a powerful rival? Well never mind it, be but of good cheer, and I will hereby promise to use my interest with Lucretia to

induce her to take you instead of Lord d'Arcy; nay now my dear Lord, why should you colour up thus, and look so tremendously angry; you could not have received this proposal more ungraciously, had I offered you myself: do my good friend smooth that brow a little before you return to your partner: remember I pray ye the old song.

“If looking well, wont win her.
Will looking cross prevail.”

“There now,” she continued, observing her companion’s countenance somewhat relax, “that little smile is more becoming to you, than I can describe.”

Lord Deresford, unable any longer to resist the ludicrous expression of Lady Caroline’s countenance, laughed aloud.

“Better and better,” she again continued; “and now I hope you will no

longer refuse to introduce me to your partner."

The Viscount replied, he would with pleasure have complied with her request, did he not feel convinced, his sister who then approached, would perform that ceremony far better than himself.

Miss Deresford being made acquainted with Lady Caroline's wish of an introduction to Sophia, immediately complied with it.

Sophia looked, as she felt, not a little surprised, when the former mentioned her Ladyship's desire to become acquainted with her, but notwithstanding this, she received the advances of the latter with the most perfect good breeding. Lord d'Arcy, who at a little distance observed what was passing, felt similar astonishment; which Lady Caroline remarking, she beckoned him to approach, and making him take the

seat vacant next her, said in a suppressed tone, " why should you or I, or even you and Lucretia be less friends than we were, before our wise parents projected this very fine alliance between our families ; which I beg leave to assure you, is as little relished by my sister, as yourself. You look incredulous ; but what I am asserting, is nevertheless strictly true. Will you then therefore promise me, to look no longer shy on your old playmates ?"

Lord d'Arcy would not have allowed he ever had done this, but Lady Caroline was not to be convinced ; and telling him, she was not ignorant of the fair one's name, for whom her sister had been rejected, she turned from him to converse with Sophia, leaving his Lordship to meditate upon what she had been saying, and much perplexed to imagine where it was possible she had learned his attachment to the latter.

Lady Caroline enquired after Emily. "That cousin of yours, my dear Miss De Clairville," she continued, "turned the heads of half the beaux the time she spent in —shire, but her heart we found "was icy cold." To look at her, one would not suppose it made of such impenetrable stuff, indeed I set her down in my tablets, *engaged*, before she came to Longueville; was I right?"

"I will not take upon myself to answer so important a question," returned Sophia smiling, "but must consign your Ladyship over to my cousin to have it resolved."

"I hope in the course of the summer," she observed, "to have an opportunity of bringing her to confession; papa has promised to take us to Southampton after the birthday; we shall then you know be within a ride of Woodley, and may perhaps induce Miss Rushbrook to accompany us in

our projected little tour, through the Isle of Wight."

Lord Deresford here interrupted their conversation, by enquiring whether Sophia felt disposed to take her place at the dance.

"Let us, my dear Miss De Clairville, manage to stand next each other in the dance," cried Lady Caroline. "At the beginning of the evening I was stationed between two young misses, who reminded me of Madame d'Arblay's Miss Lusson, from whom I could with difficulty obtain a yes or no, whilst I remained near them: and my partner, poor soul! though the son of a duke is as stupid an animal as you would wish to be yoked to for two dances; one of them however is happily over; and through the next I intend to beg Lord d'Arcy to take compassion on me; oh! there is his Lordship watching us! do you not think

my dear Miss De Clairville, that I am the object of attraction to him this moment? ”

“ I have not the smallest doubt of it,” replied Sophia, endeavouring though in vain to prevent herself from colouring, as Lady Caroline looked archly at her.

Lord Deresford, who had scarcely addressed a word to Sophia, since his conversation with Lady Caroline, at the conclusion of the second dance, after seeing her accommodated with a seat, said, as for an instant he placed himself by her, “ I am now going to leave you Miss De Clairville to be claimed by a partner, in every respect more agreeable than it has been in my power, earnestly as I have wished it, to render myself to you.” He paused for an instant, and then continued in a hurried tone, “ I shall leave Town to-morrow, and if I may be allowed to hope, you will sometimes remember there is in existence so wretched a

being as myself, I shall feel something resembling happiness."

Sophia, much distressed at witnessing the Viscount's apparent wretchedness, wishing to address him, yet scarcely knowing in what manner, said after a little hesitation, "I fear my Lord you are not well this evening,"

"Ah! enough at ease, believe me," he replied mournfully; "But let me no longer take up these precious moments, you would rather devote to the happy d'Arcy. Farewell then, dearest, loveliest of women! and may nothing prevent your happiness with him, who, notwithstanding he has destroyed mine, I cannot yet forget was the once valued friend and companion of my youth."

The next minute the Viscount had vanished, and Lord d'Arcy had taken posses-

sion of his vacant seat by the side of Sophia, who had not recovered from the consternation Lord Deresford's address and subsequent abrupt departure had occasioned her.

Lord d'Arcy, observing the varying colour of her complexion, enquired in a tone of the deepest interest, if she were not well, entreating her at the same time to permit him to accompany her to another apartment, where she might find a less oppressive atmosphere than the one she was then inhaling.

Sophia apprehensive of his suspecting the real cause of her agitation, acknowledged the heat of the room had a little overcome her; but as she already felt better, declined following his advice.

After conversing with her a short time upon indifferent subjects, Lord d'Arcy reverted

to Sophia's late illness, which he had heard from Mrs. Singleton had been a very severe one, and to which she attributed her loss of colour. "Will you pardon me," he said, "if I acknowledge my selfish heart would in some degree have felt soothed, could I have believed myself in any degree the cause of your indisposition."

"Let us not my Lord" returned Sophia, as she gently withdrew the hand he had taken, "recur to times gone by, but rather let us dwell on that happiness, which is still within our reach, if we do not wilfully throw it from us,"

"You Sophia may talk thus," returned Lord d'Arcy with a bitter smile, "for Deresford has taught you where to find that happiness you would in vain persuade me is so easy of attainment. Happy, happy George! he continued, to find so apt a pupil."

My Lord, continued Sophia reproachfully, "this is not language proper for you to make use of, or for me to hear; indeed you make me repent having consented to dance with you."

"Cruel unfeeling girl! can you make no allowances for a heart torn as mine is, in the knowledge of your attachment to another."

At this moment, when Sophia, angry with Lord d'Arcy for his unguarded conduct, was on the point of showing how much she was so, by leaving him and going in search of Mrs Singleton; Lady Caroline approached, and not observing the flushed cheek of his Lordship, or the pallid one of Sophia, seated herself by the latter, of whom she enquired what she had done to Lord Deresford to occasion his abrupt departure. "He passed me" she continued, "as I was conversing with Sir

sensibly : at the sound of voices approaching, the stranger started, and for a second a hectic blush illuminated a face, in which the most exquisite beauty was still visible perhaps increased by this fatal disease. Upon finding herself an object of attention, she rose from her seat, and attempted to leave the arbour; but the shortness and oppression of her breath would not allow of it. Sophia was hastening forward to offer her assistance as an elderly lady joined the invalid, and drawing her arm within her own, she in a gentle voice reproached her young companion for attempting to walk without assistance. The latter replied in a still lower tone, and notwithstanding Sophia slackened her pace, the indistinctness with which she spoke rendered it impossible for her to understand the purport of her speech. Politeness would not permit her to linger longer, but as she with Eliza passed them to reach the gate where the

barouche was waiting for them, Sophia could not resist taking another look at the beautiful young stranger, whose interesting expression of countenance had made so deep an impression on her, she believed it impossible it could be ever forgotten, their eyes met at the same moment, and by the expression that appeared in those of the stranger, it seemed she had imbibed something of a similar prejudice in favor of Sophia, who was not however permitted to make any further observations, as Eliza quite out of patience, entreated her to hasten to the carriage.

This little incident had for the time diverted Sophia's attention from Lord dArcy but Eliza's inquiring if she intended returning home, recalled him to her recollection, she therefore requested her companion would first accompany her to one or two shops, and then finding no further excuse for delaying her return, allowed

Eliza, to order the carriage back to Seymore street, expecting, yet dreading to hear from Charlotte the anger of Lord d'Arcy, on finding she had broken her promise of granting him that morning a private audience.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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